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JAMES BOND 007 NIGHTFIRE

The creators of Half-Life are back with a licence to kill...
Massive preview and world's first screenshots inside

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

GRAND THEFT AUTO III



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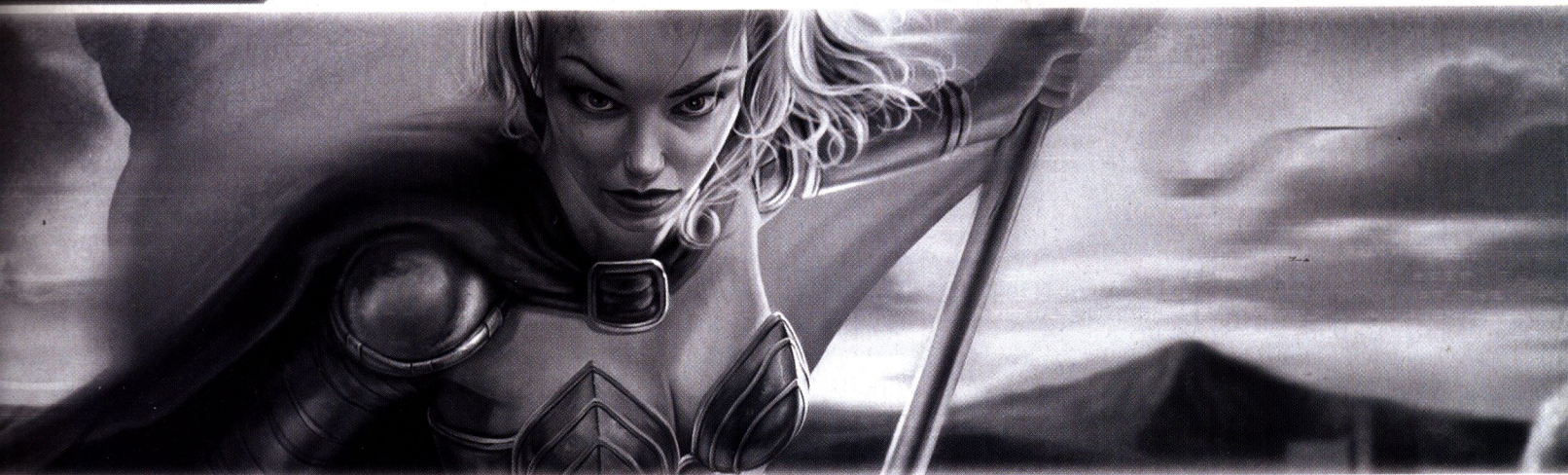
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THE END OF CIVILISATION HAS BEEN VERY WELL RECEIVED.

'Halo is the most consuming, overwhelming, coherent videogame Edge has played for years.' 10/10. **EDGE**

'Quite simply a masterpiece, and without question one of the best games ever made.' **Official UK Xbox Magazine**

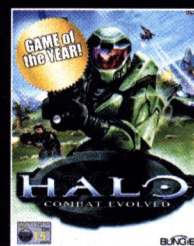
'Halo, the game that sets the Xbox apart from the competition.' **The Mirror**



So far, the task of saving mankind from imminent destruction has not only been critically acclaimed, but positively relished. With over a million copies sold worldwide it's nice to see that even in these dark days, the human spirit shines through. Shame it has to be crushed utterly.

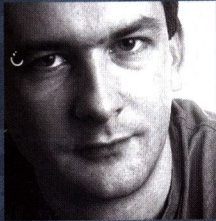
www.xbox.com/uk/halo

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contents →

Snookered



Spurred on by watching the final of the World Snooker Championship (and deciding that by watching for a few hours I suddenly knew how to play), I decided to get acquainted with the baize at my local snooker club. After negotiating the intercom system and with only half a mind on the fact

that a gunfight had broken out on the premises a few months before, I racked the balls up and prepared for my first shot. The white ball sailed up the table, hit the top cushion and sailed back down without hitting a single red – at which point I announced that I was just trying to gauge the speed of the table. Despite getting away with this barefaced lie I didn't win a frame all night, scored a top break of eight and was roundly laughed at by half of the clientele (the other half being too busy taking a shot to see what I was up to).

That night I learnt that if you want to do something that you're unqualified for, or you want to attempt something without life's harsh repercussions, you should do it in the safety of your own home on your PC. Thankfully I realised this before embarking on a life of crime that would have seen me hospitalised, incarcerated and entombed before the sun set. In the past week I've killed, maimed, and double-crossed crime bosses. I've stolen any car that takes my fancy, avoided the drug squad after a raid at a warehouse party and blown up a business owned by the Triads. You don't even want to know what I got up to in the privacy of half a dozen alleyways, although you can see how it all ended in our exclusive review of the game of the year so far, *Grand Theft Auto III*.

And that's not all. In one of our most exciting issues ever we've got another Classic in *Morrowind* and the scoop on some of the most secret projects in the PC's history. With E3 just around the corner we managed to persuade the developers to let us publicly launch some of the biggest titles of the coming year with the first news and screenshots for the new Bond project, *NightFire*, as well as the Indy game, *The Emperor's Tomb*. We've also got the world's first in-game screenshots from *Deus Ex 2*, *EverQuest II* and the hitherto unannounced sequel *Commandos 3*. Next month we'll have an in-depth report from the biggest games' show in the world and the first full preview of *Doom 3*. Enjoy the issue.

Dave Woods
Editor



JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE P46

THE NAME IS ZONE. PC ZONE. AND WE'VE GOT THE SCOOP ON THE GREATEST BOND GAME EVER. GOLDENEYE? GOLDENBALLS MORE LIKE, THIS IS NIGHTFIRE

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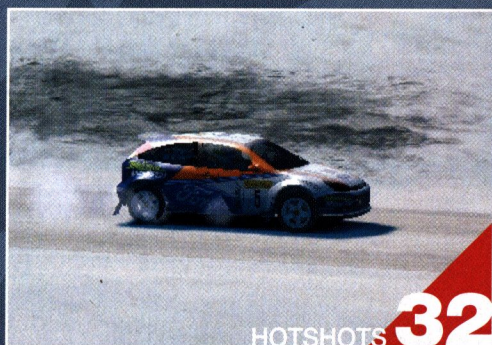
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BULLETIN

- 8 **COMMANDOS 3**
TWO WORLD WARS, ONE WORLD CUP
AND A THIRD COMMANDOS GAME
- 10 **EVERQUEST II**
THE NEVERENDING STORY GOES ON,
AND ON, AND ON
- 12 **SUM OF ALL FEARS**
IT ALL ADDS UP TO QUITE A GAME,
MINUS THE TITLE
- 32 **HOTSHOTS**
COLIN MCRAE 3 AND DEUS EX 2

FEATURES

- 36 **ROOM 101**
THE MAN WHO KNOWS IS IN FOR PAUL
MERTON, THE GAMES INDUSTRY IS
THE SPECIAL GUEST
- 142 **GAMES THAT CHANGED
THE WORLD**
DIDN'T SO MUCH CHANGE THE
WORLD AS SHOVE A SHOTGUN UP ITS
ARSE. MEET DOOM



HARDWARE

- 104 **NEWS**
CAN CREATIVE STEAL THE GEFORCE?
- 108 **HARDWARE REVIEWS**
HOT 3D CARDS AND COOL PCS
- 112 **DEAR WANDY**
HE'S THE MOST TIP-TOP, BIOS CAT
- 114 **WATCHDOG**
ARE YOU BEING SERVED?

EXTENDED PLAY

- 122 **THE GUIDE**
LEARN HOW TO SERVE UP A
GAMING FEAST
- 124 **MODSQUAD**
REACHING TO THE CONVERTED
- 126 **DISC PAGES**
- 131 **FIGHT CLUB**
STEP OUTSIDE AND WE CAN SETTLE
THIS LIKE MEN
- 132 **MAILBOX**
WRITE IN AND WIN YOURSELF A PRIZE

REAR VIEW

- 136 **THE A-LIST**
YOUR ONE-STOP GAME
BUYER'S GUIDE
- 141 **RETROZONE**
RELIVE MAY 1997
- 146 **COMMENT**
WANDY WONDERS WTF IS SO
SPECIAL ABOUT CS

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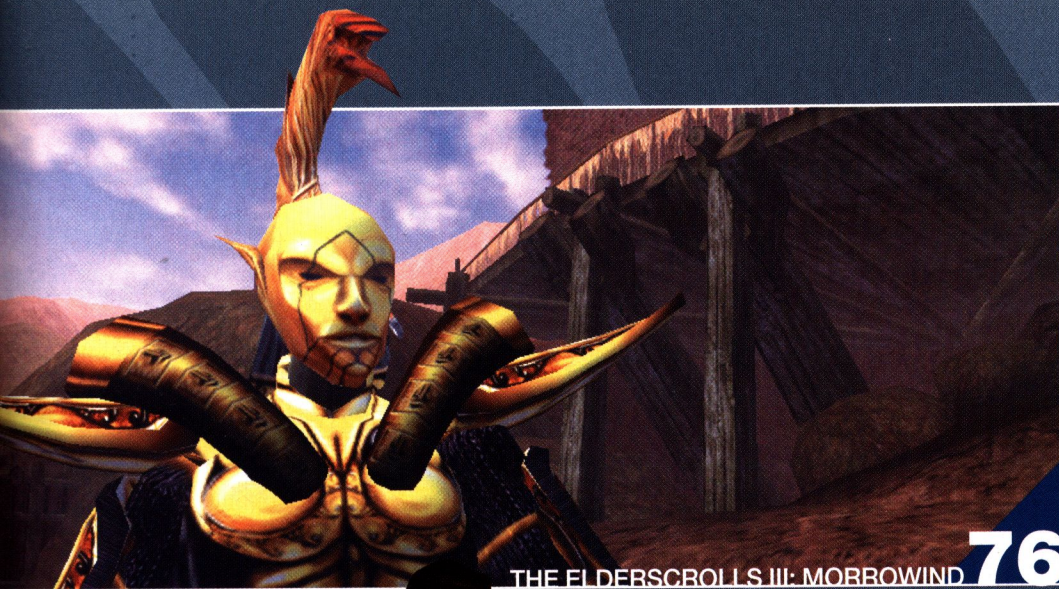
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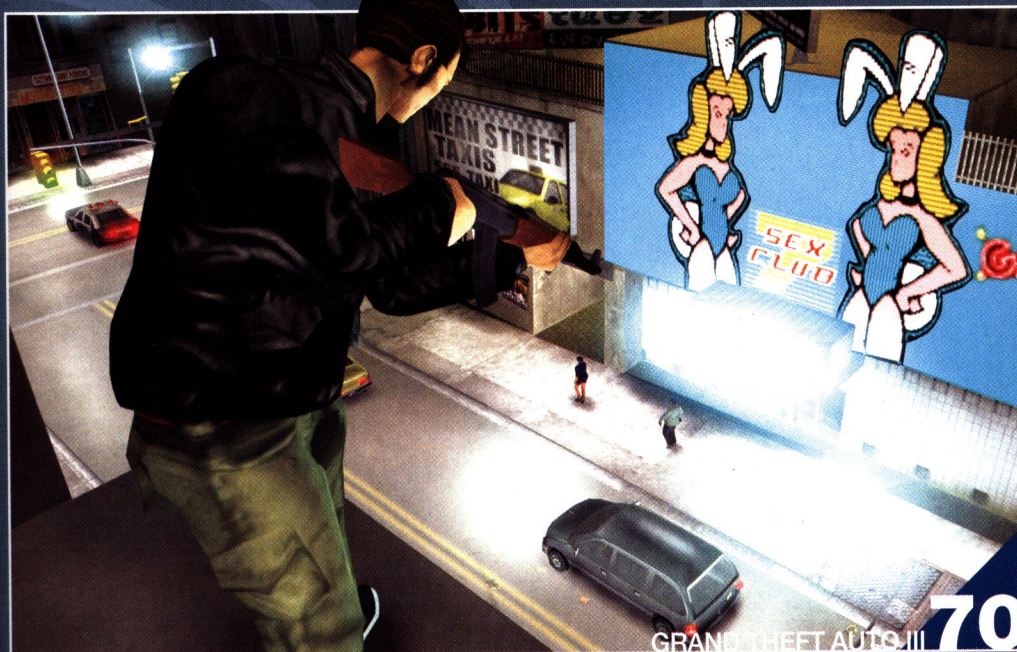
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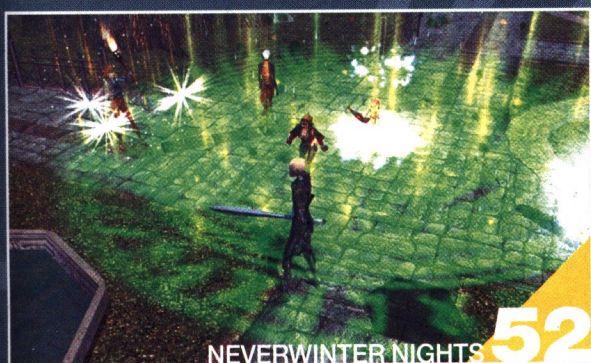
THE ELDERSCROLLS III: MORROWIND

76



GRAND THEFT AUTO III

70



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

52

PREVIEWS

- 46 JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE
- 52 NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
- 56 CRAZY TAXI
- 60 BATTLEFIELD: 1942
- 62 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

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contents

REVIEWS

- 70 **GRAND THEFT AUTO III**
THE SICKEST GAME SINCE ADVANCED LAWNMOWER SIMULATOR
- 76 **ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND**
BEARD AND BEAUTIFUL
- 80 **F1 2002**
ATTACK OF THE CLONES
- 83 **STEALTH COMBAT**
ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES
- 84 **DIE HARD: NAKATOMI PLAZA**
THE BEST LEFT-HANDED FPS EVER
- 87 **CULTURES 2**
SEA SHELLS SANCTUARY
- 88 **KING OF THE ROAD**
- 88 **ATROX**
- 89 **SPIDERMAN: THE MOVIE**
- 90 **HOTEL GIANT**
- 90 **WORLD CUP MANAGER**
- 90 **MONSTERVILLE**
- 91 **JERUSALEM**
- 91 **THE SECRET OF NAUTILUS**
- 91 **PAC-MAN ALL-STARS**
- 94 **RE-RELEASES**
MONEY FOR OLD ROPE
- 96 **UPDATES**
DUNGEON SIEGE, BRIDGE COMMANDER, C&C: RENEGADE AND SERIOUS SAM 2
- 98 **SUPERTEST**
IS THE FORCE STRONG IN STAR WARS GAMES?



CRAZY TAXI

56



Back behind enemy lines...

COMMANDOS 3

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Pyro

PUBLISHER Eidos

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE June 2003

WEBSITE www.pyrostudios.com

IN SUMMARY

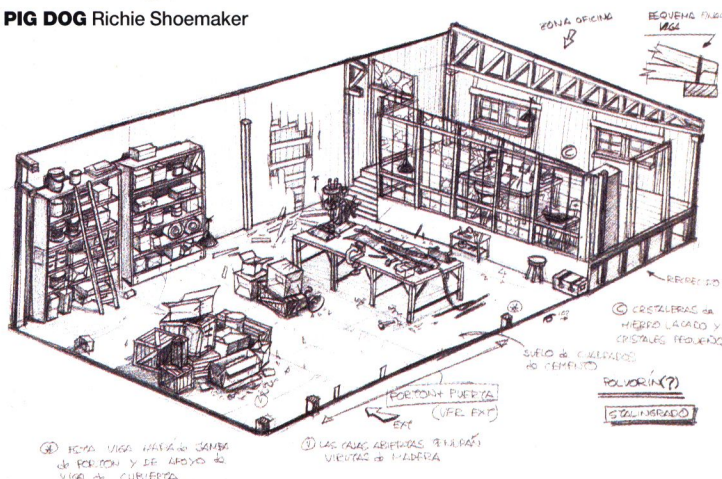
More comic book-style WWII action from the masters of wartime derring-do. Squad-level strategy is again the order of the day, this time with an enhanced engine, better AI and more enemies and equipment. It's all a bit hush-hush, but there are grand plans for the multiplayer game as well.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

A new *Commandos* game is always a big deal and though we have our doubts about the game being finished by next summer, it's good to hear the wait won't be as long as the last one. New missions based in Normandy, Stalingrad and Berlin, not to mention a more story-focused structure, hint at a more epic feel and, we're assured, it won't be as hard as the last two.

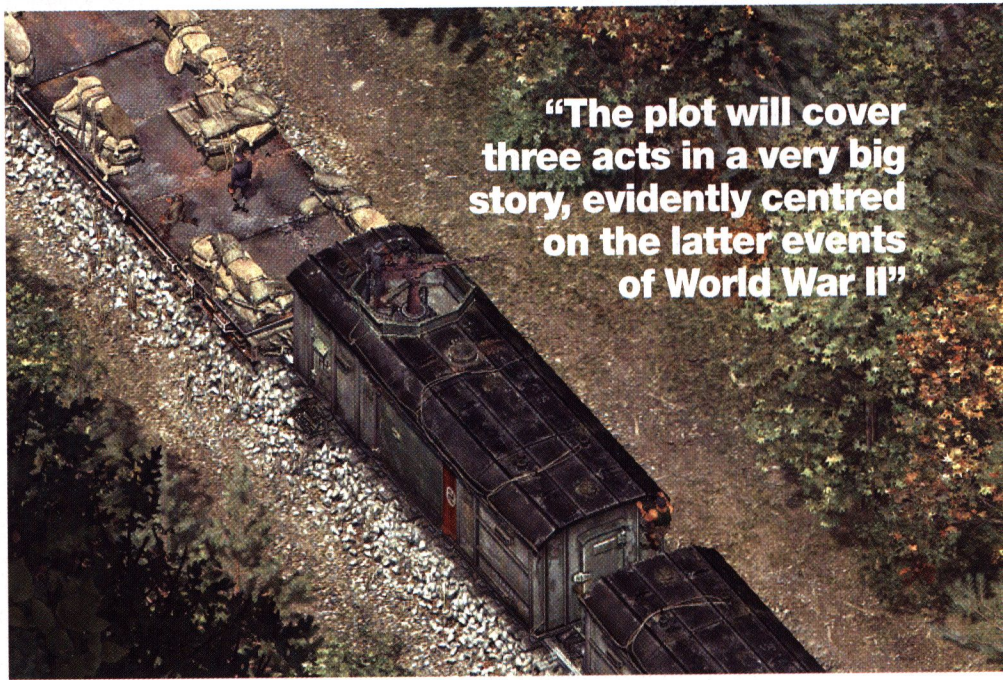
The Men Of Courage are back

■ **ENGLISH PIG DOG** Richie Shoemaker





It seems that, apart from greater detail in the backgrounds, *Commandos 3* will sport 3D polygonal characters, meaning much more fluid animations.



"The plot will cover three acts in a very big story, evidently centred on the latter events of World War II"

BACK IN THE '70s, war comics were all the rage. Every week you could pick up a copy of *Warlord* and on the bus to school you would read of the continuing adventures of Peter Flint as he lorded his way behind enemy lines killing spies, traitors and German generals. Such comics offered historical fact, an appreciation of other cultures and the ritual killing of Nazis and Fascists – all for the cost of a few penny chews.

But times change. Though the comics are long dead, their spirit lives on in computer games and if any one game has captured the valiant antics of those comic book heroes, it is the *Commandos* series, where sneaking around Nazi bases, clubbing guards, rescuing prisoners and planting explosives is all in a day's work. All that was missing were the speech bubbles.

The third instalment in the series is now officially on its way, and while it's not 3D, using the same engine as its predecessor, we can't wait to get back behind enemy lines. "Gameplay-wise it is going to be a completely new experience," says Iñigo Vinós, Pyro Studios' marketing manager.

"There are going to be situations completely new to *Commandos* players: level bosses, lots of new enemies, and ambush situations. The enemies will be much more active and their behaviour incredibly varied. *Commandos 2* was a big step up from the first game in terms of AI, and the same will happen again with *Commandos 3*."

Of course even more than the comic book influences, it's the film references that made the previous games. Re-enacting scenes from the likes of *Bridge Over The River Kwai*, *The Guns Of Navarone* and *The Colditz Story* are just a few that spring to mind.

"The war movie influences will continue," says Vinós. "For instance, at a certain point it will be necessary to eliminate a sniper who will not remain in the same position. This is taken from *Enemy At The Gates*."

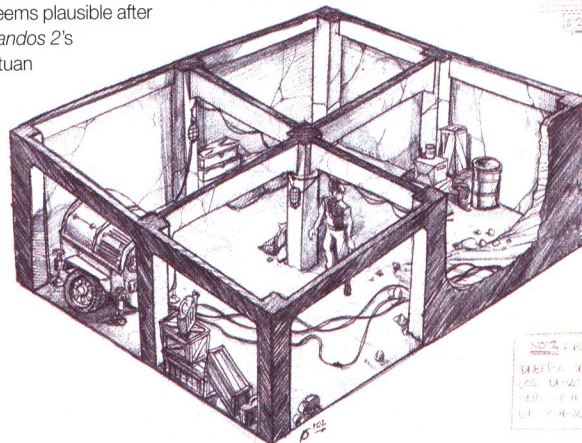
Though Pyro remains quite cagey about what missions will be available, we do know that unlike *Commandos 2*, the European theatre will be the main focus of the game. Also, along with the existing game engine, the old cast are returning for another tour

of duty, with plenty of new equipment and abilities to play around with, as well as new enemies to outwit.

Interestingly, Pyro is going for a much more story-focused game this time, so rather than being split into many unrelated missions, the plot will cover three acts in a very big story, evidently centred on the latter months of World War II. We can only guess how this will manifest itself gameplay-wise, but a wide variety of missions and level sizes seems plausible after *Commandos 2*'s gargantuan levels.

After making him swear that the new game will be slightly easier than its predecessors, we left Iñigo with only one remaining question: will we be able to play as the Germans?

"Let's just say that you should keep your eye on the new multiplayer modes. Did we mention the Deathma... sorry we can't say anything about that yet." **PCZ**



ALBERTO VINO
1999

ALBERTO VINO
1999



Citizens of Norrath, rejoice...

EVERQUEST II

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Verant Interactive

PUBLISHER Sony Online/Ubisoft

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Q4 2003

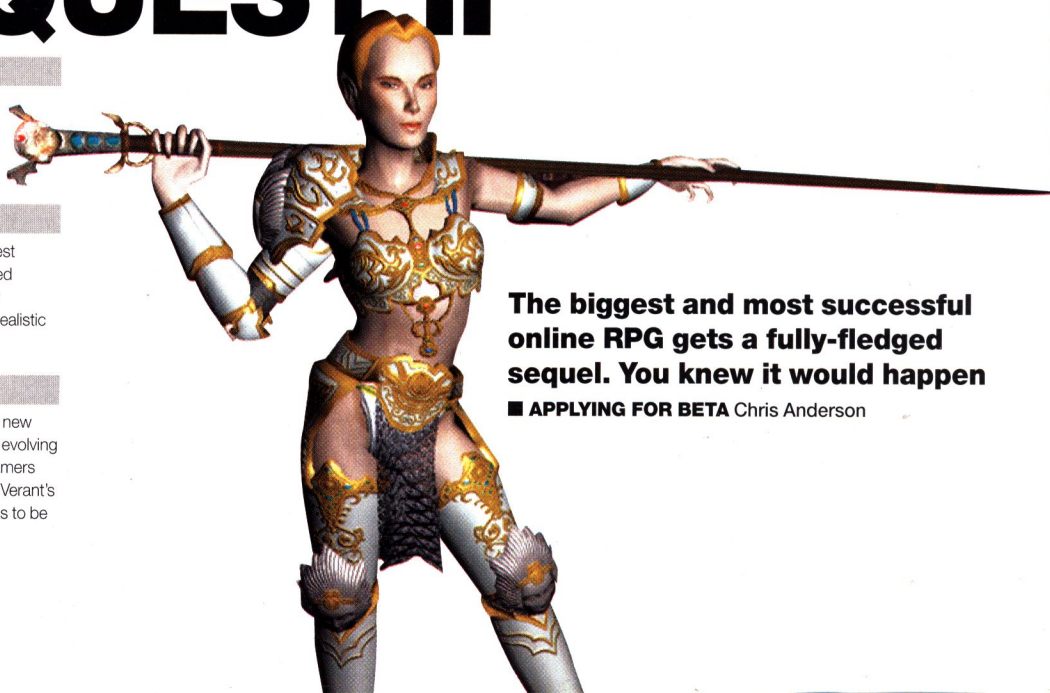
WEBSITE everquest2.station.sony.com

IN SUMMARY

It's a 'proper' sequel for *EverQuest*, the world's biggest MMORPG, with a brand new 3D engine and redefined character development and skill system. The all-new graphics engine offers a far less cartoony and more realistic game environment (just check out the screenshots).

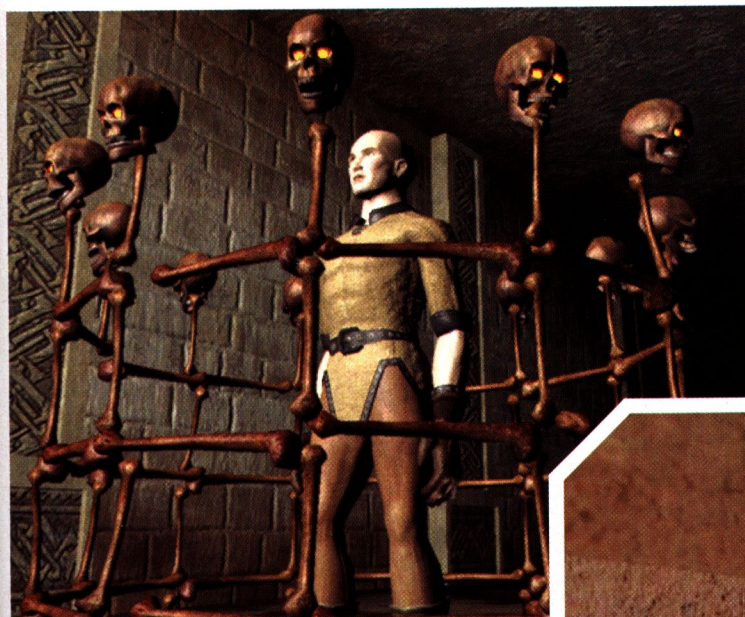
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Apart from the fact that it looks simply incredible, the new version of Norrath will add player housing and a new evolving class structure, as well as the promise that casual gamers will finally get something out of *EQ*. For *EQ* veterans, Verant's statement that downtime will be addressed surely has to be the best news they've heard in some time.



The biggest and most successful online RPG gets a fully-fledged sequel. You knew it would happen

■ **APPLYING FOR BETA** Chris Anderson



EverQuest II, if these screens are any indication, will be an altogether more mature visual experience than its illustrious predecessor. Richer and more detailed game environments are evident, but more importantly, the monsters look damned scary.



CREATING A SEQUEL for the most successful online RPG to date was never going to be easy. Convincing *EverQuest*'s existing subscribers to give up the incredible amount of time they have spent developing their characters is a pretty tall order, particularly since existing *EverQuest* characters will not be transferred to *EQ2* when it goes live at the end of next year. But the simple truth is that *EverQuest*'s sagging graphics are not getting any younger, and the only way Verant can keep up with the next generation of MMORPGs is to start afresh.

To soften the blow for its often fanatical fan base, Verant seems to have taken a long hard look at games like *Anarchy Online* and *Asheron's Call* and ripped out all the good bits for its sequel. This process also means that many of the worst things about the current game will not be making an appearance in the sequel. In particular, the huge amount of time it takes to achieve anything, and the horrible downtime (time spent with nothing to do because you have no health or mana, etc.) will allegedly be addressed in the new game. *Anarchy*

Online made huge headway in this particular area, and if *EQ2* follows suit then this is reason to be cheerful indeed for *EverQuest* fans.

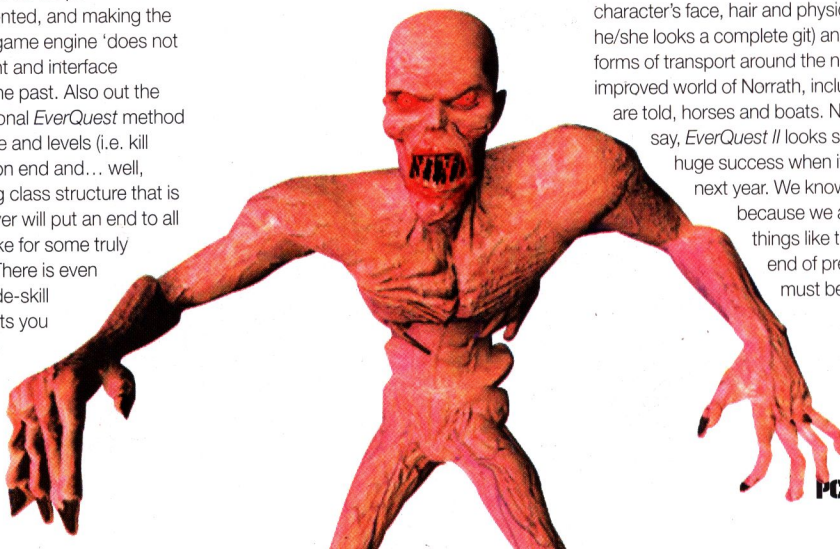
Of more importance perhaps for the uninitiated, a brand new game engine has been designed from scratch by the *EQ2* team. With any luck it will be a lot more flexible than the current one, allowing things that players ask to be put in the game to be implemented, and making the old excuse that the game engine 'does not support' new content and interface changes a thing of the past. Also out the window is the traditional *EverQuest* method of gaining experience and levels (i.e. kill monsters for hours on end and... well, that's it). A branching class structure that is definable by the player will put an end to all this, and should make for some truly unique characters. There is even the promise of a trade-skill class, which suggests you can gain experience and levels without even killing anything at all.

"The simple truth is that *EQ*'s sagging graphics are not getting any younger"

Graphically, as is evident from the shots on these pages, *EQ2* looks stunning. The mind boggles as to what type of PC will be needed to run this in full detail when it's released, but it's a safe bet that a Pentium II with 64 megs of RAM will not do the trick.

Other highlights include player housing (this was very popular in *Ultima Online*), fully customisable character appearance (yes, you can mess about endlessly with your character's face, hair and physique until he/she looks a complete git) and varied forms of transport around the new and improved world of Norrath, including, we are told, horses and boats. Needless to say, *EverQuest II* looks set to be a huge success when it's released next year. We know this,

because we always say things like that at the end of previews, so it must be true. **PCZ**





Calculated carnage...

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Red Storm

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE July

WEBSITE www.redstorm.com/games

IN SUMMARY

It's the game of the film of the book, but one that only loosely parallels the source material. Essentially this is Red Storm's attempt to take the *Rainbow Six* formula and make it more accessible to the elusive mainstream, with a hugely streamlined planning phase and action-oriented gameplay.

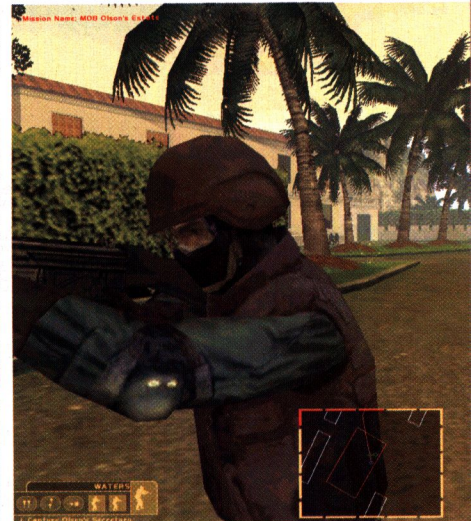
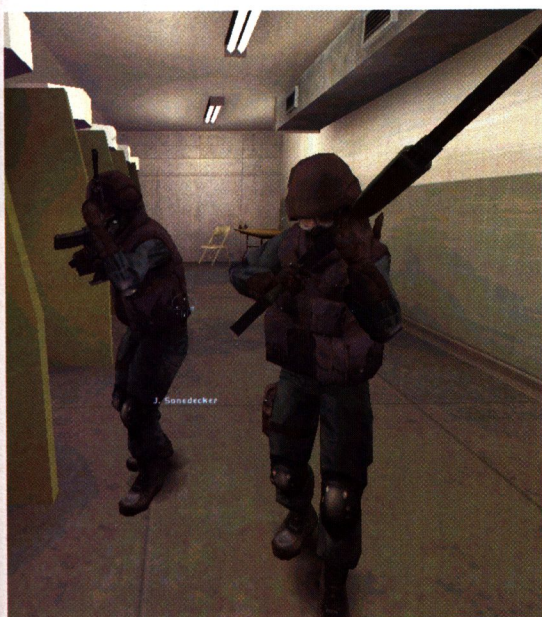
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Well, however much the tactical side of things is simplified, this is still Red Storm doing what it does best – real-world counter-terrorist action with all the guns, hostages and flashbangs you can handle. Plus it's built on a modified *Ghost Recon* engine, so it looks a treat. And besides, some of us don't like all that nitpicky pre-planning malarkey.

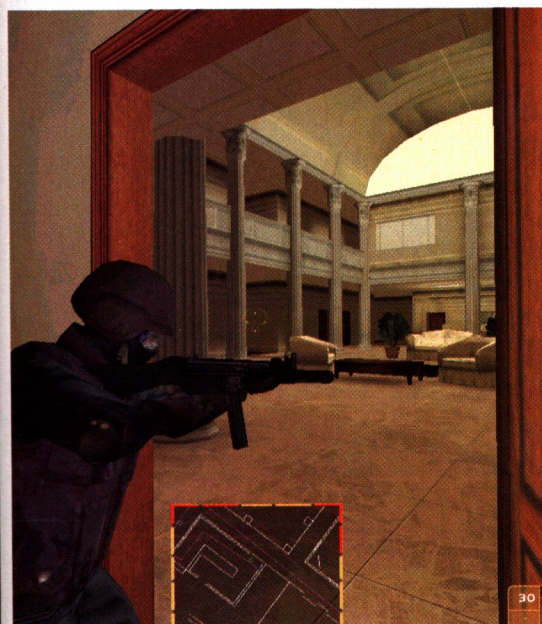
Another Clancy blockbuster spawns a game, but is it just *Rainbow Six* for dummies?

■ SLICING THE PIE Anthony Holden





The nature of the missions in *SOAF* finds us in familiar terrain, with incursions of the hostage rescue and terrorist takedown variety, as well as variations such as bug placement and demolition jobs.



SOMEONE AT RED STORM must have had their arse kicked. In the half a decade since Tom Clancy set the studio up to make games with his name on them, Red Storm has carved out a reputation as the leading developer of realistic tactical shooters. But for all the manifold charms of games such as *Rainbow Six* and *Ghost Recon*, there's one small problem with them – they're a little too hardcore for Joe Casual. And while that's great if you're a devoted gamer or a gun-happy psychopath, it's not so good for Tom Clancy's bank balance (or more to the point, that of Red Storm's owner, Ubi Soft).

As a result, we're now seeing the Tom Clancy stable undergoing what in publishing speak they call 'broadening the customer base of a proven property'. To you and I, that means *Rainbow Six* style games without all the nasty tactical fiddling and waypoint setting that scares off the action-minded. And what better way to kick-start this new strategy than to launch a game in conjunction with Tom Clancy's latest summer blockbuster, opening soon at a cinema near you, *The Sum Of All Fears*.

However, before you start listing all the reasons games based on films are not to be trusted, take a deep breath, for this is no mere big-screen cash-in. In fact, *The Sum Of All Fears* was originally going to be a totally separate Tom Clancy game, built on a tweaked *Ghost Recon* engine. Only when the opportunity to tie it in with the film arose was the storyline adapted to fit.

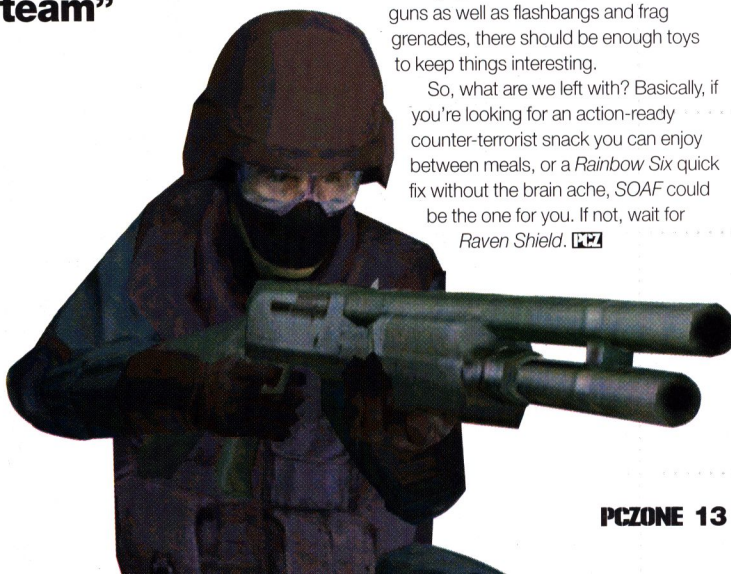
What we're left with is a tactical FPS with only superficial similarities to the film, but with strong links to the *Rainbow Six* series. Instead of playing the film's lead character Jack Ryan, you find yourself back in the snug confines of a covert ops ski mask leading a small counter-terrorist team through 11 globe-hopping single-player scenarios. In between missions Jack does pop his head in to lend some words of wisdom, but as the game contains no likenesses or voices from the film we are spared the ignominy of taking advice from Ben Ass-fleck. Thank the Lord.

Where the game really departs from the *R6* formula is in the depth of tactics and pre-mission planning required. Each mission still begins with a session at the

"You're back in the snug confines of a covert ops ski mask, leading a counter-terrorist team"

blackboard, but with a vastly reduced number of options. For those who can't be arsed laying out a strategy, there are pre-set waypoints, teams are fixed, and all that's really required is to choose a weapon set for your team. One set. So if you want to be a sniper, everyone's a sniper. The result of this is that your wingmen essentially revert to being spare lives, though with 15 real-life guns as well as flashbangs and frag grenades, there should be enough toys to keep things interesting.

So, what are we left with? Basically, if you're looking for an action-ready counter-terrorist snack you can enjoy between meals, or a *Rainbow Six* quick fix without the brain ache, *SOAF* could be the one for you. If not, wait for *Raven Shield*. **PCZ**



BULLETIN

STOP THE MADNESS



NEWS EDITOR Anthony Holden

▲ We haven't even been to E3 at the time of writing, but already the shockwaves are being felt. You can't help feeling that there's a certain insanity in having a single, annual games exhibition that covers the entire industry, as so many new announcements come tumbling together that nobody can possibly take them all in.

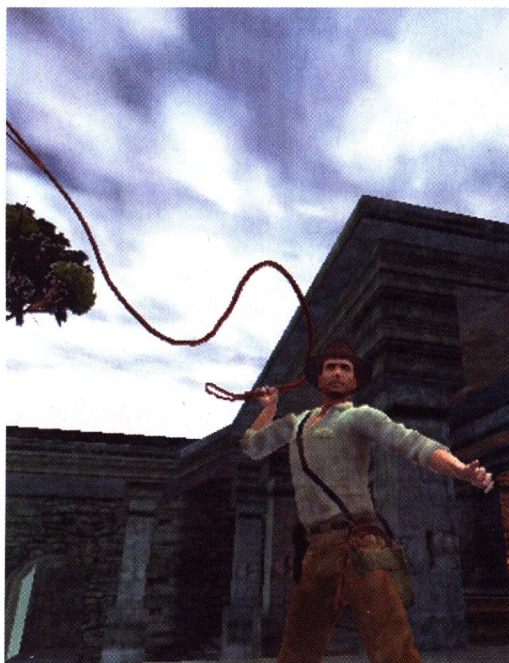
Last month's trickle of pre-E3 announcements has now swelled into a mighty flood, and as a result it's a bumper Bulletin section. Of particular interest, to me at least, is word of a new PC-bound *Metal Gear Solid* game (page 25). It's no secret that *MGS* is one of my all-time favourite games, and the prospect of a *Metal Gear* game built for the PC from the ground up is undeniably appealing.

But of possibly even greater significance is the announcement of a sequel to the biggest name in online role-playing, *EverQuest II*. Not many announcements in this business are capable of putting competitors out of business before the race has even started, but that's what I suspect will happen in the MMORPG sector following this revelation. *EQ2* looks so much better than almost every other MMOG in development that there's sure to be a wave of project cancellations in its wake. Check out page 12 to see what I mean.

Despite any of this, it's pretty obvious what everyone will actually be talking about at the show. Unless someone drops a major bombshell (like *Half-Life 2*) it's going to be *Doom III*. See you next month with this and so much more it's frankly ridiculous.

Calling Doctor Jones

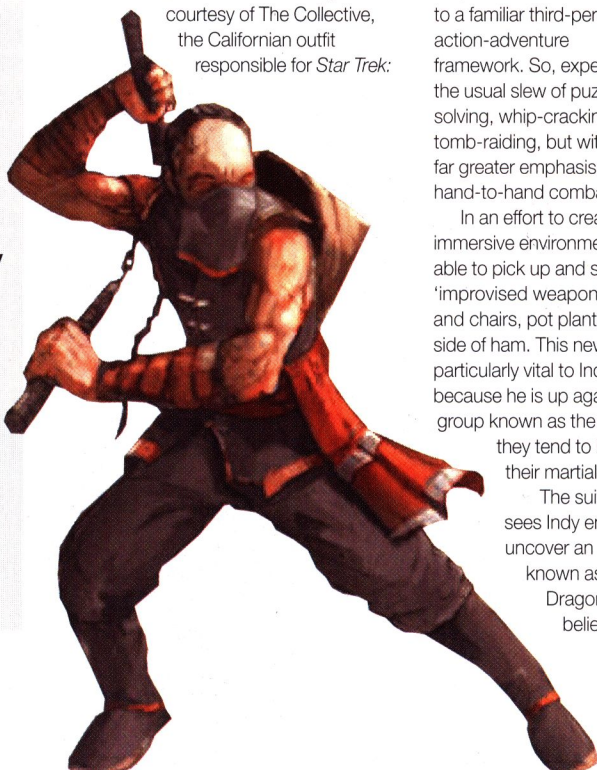
The original tomb raider returns in *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb*



An advanced camera tracking system is promised to avoid nasty visibility problems.

WHILE NOT QUITE the same as a new Indiana Jones film, a new Indiana Jones game is always good news. Loved by all, he's an action hero of whom we will never tire, despite the often formulaic nature of previous Indy games.

As we mentioned back in issue 114, Dr Jones' latest outing comes courtesy of The Collective, the Californian outfit responsible for *Star Trek*:



DS9: The Fallen. LucasArts took the opportunity of E3 to release the first screenshots and details of the game, now revealed as *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb*, and as suspected it returns Indy to a familiar third-person action-adventure framework. So, expect the usual slew of puzzle-solving, whip-cracking and tomb-raiding, but with a far greater emphasis on hand-to-hand combat.

In an effort to create a more tactile and immersive environment, Indy will now be able to pick up and swing all sorts of 'improvised weapons' such as shovels and chairs, pot plants... maybe the odd side of ham. This new feature will be particularly vital to Indy in his new adventure because he is up against a Chinese Triad group known as the Black Dragon, and they tend to be a bit handy with their martial arts.

The suitably epic storyline sees Indy embroiled in a plot to uncover an ancient artefact known as the Heart of the Dragon, a black pearl believed to endow its



Bad guys will soon be dancing to your chin music.

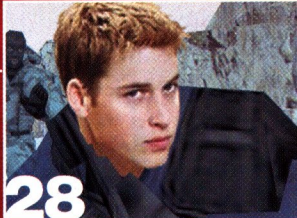
owner with the power of mind control. It's up to Indy to retrieve the Heart before it falls into the hands of the Black Dragon Triad, but to do so he must first locate the three pieces of the Dragon Seal, the key to unlocking the Heart's secret resting place. This search takes Indy from a sinister castle in Prague to a submerged palace in Istanbul, from the streets of Hong Kong to the waterways of Ceylon, all the while accompanied by his lovely new cohort Mei Ying. The little minx.

Babes, whips, chop-tastic martial arts action and a few random Nazis to kill – what more could you possibly want?

LucasArts/The Collective • ETA Q3 2002 • www.lucasarts.com/products/indiana



21 EMULATION ZONE
The original stealth action game



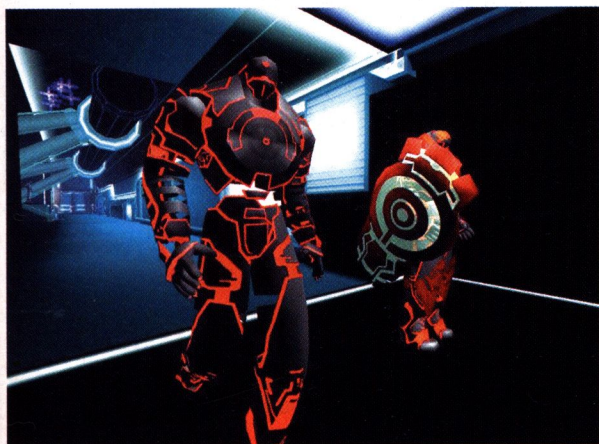
28 THE MAN WHO KNOWS
Recycling the industry's trash



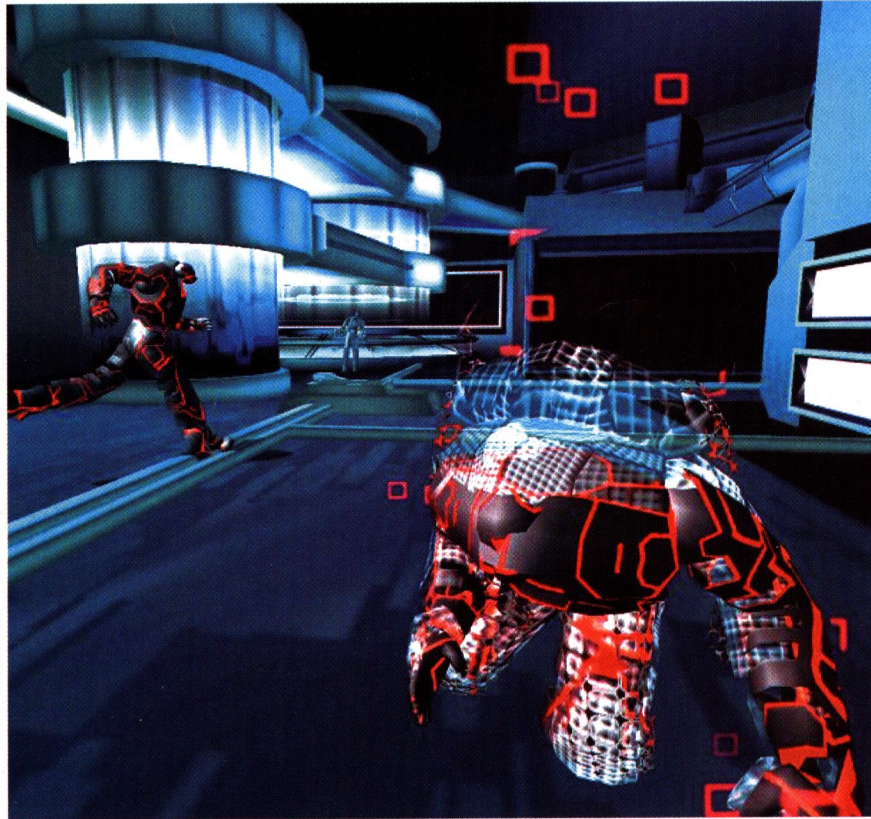
30 PCZONE CHARTS
Latest charts and release dates



32 HOTSHOTS
Colin McRae 3 – in-game shots!



Your default weapon is a throwing disc, which can be upgraded with features such as homing ability and explosive power.



Ghost in the machine

The cyberspace fantasies of a generation finally take form in *Tron 2.0*

THE SHAGGY D.A. notwithstanding, *Tron* is probably the coolest thing ever produced by Disney. It remains one of the defining moments in the evolution of computer culture, and inspired an entire generation to have stupid schoolyard conversations about how brilliant it would be to have a real-life lightcycle. Now, 20 years later, *Tron* is back. There's a new *Tron* film in the works, tentatively (and crappily) titled *Tron Killer App*, and there's this – *Tron 2.0*, the new first-person action game from veteran FPS developer Monolith (AvP 2).

For the philistines among you, *Tron* was the story of a young hacker and videogame designer (Jeff Bridges), who is forcibly digitised and dragged into the innards of a computer, where it turns out that computer programs are actually little people running around inside cyberspace, playing deadly gladiatorial games and struggling against the tyranny of the Master Control Program. Some seriously whacked-out shit really, but a fertile ground for computer game spin-offs nonetheless.

Happily for fans, the look of the new game is unmistakably *Tron*, with many of the most popular devices from the film making an appearance – lightcycle racing, the Game Grid, programs both aggressive and neutral. The storyline takes place 20 years after the events of the film, and puts you in the shoes of programmer Jet Bradley, son of Alan, the guy who created the *Tron* program in the first place. In the last 20 years Alan has perfected the technology used to digitise matter and insert it into a computer – unfortunately an evil Internet company has subsequently decided that this would be handy for use in taking

over the world. Specially trained digital terrorists called Data Wraiths have been dropped into

cyberspace with the aim of taking control of military and government systems, and it's up to you to stop them. Oh, and find your Dad, who seems to have been cyber-napped along the way.

Of course it's the 21st century now, so you won't simply be confined to one PC during your quest. Moving through the Internet, you'll negotiate PCs, databases, mainframes, firewalls and even PDAs, gaining weapons and skills along the way. You'll also be able to upgrade your equipment and programming with new sub-routines that increase performance and add functionality.

With the added promise of puzzle-solving elements and lightcycle shenanigans, *Tron 2.0* is clearly not your average point-and-shoot FPS. Add to this the realisation that a *Tron* FPS has been begging to be made for years, and we could be looking at something truly special.



Monolith • ETA TBA • www.lith.com

SHORTS

IRON STRATEGY



UK developer Headfirst Productions (*Call Of Cthulhu*) has announced a new title, *Iron Kingdoms*. Based on the tabletop RPG of the same name, *Iron Kingdoms* is "a new type of strategy game involving advanced AI and tactics". Unfortunately, Headfirst's new website has removed all mention of the *Battle Of The Planets* game that was previously in the works.

UNDRAPING PILLAGE



Manchester-based developer ZedTwo, which made a splash in 1998 with hit puzzle game *Wetrix*, has revealed a new action-strategy game called *Pillage*. It's a cartoony affair in which you control a motley group of rebels trying to throw off a tyrannical regime, and is due in late 2002.

WAR EXTENDED



Cossacks II may be on its way (see story on the right), but GSC Game World is still supporting its original historical RTS with the announcement of *Cossacks: Back To War*, the second *Cossacks* expansion pack. Features include 100 new single-player missions, new buildings and units and two new playable nations.

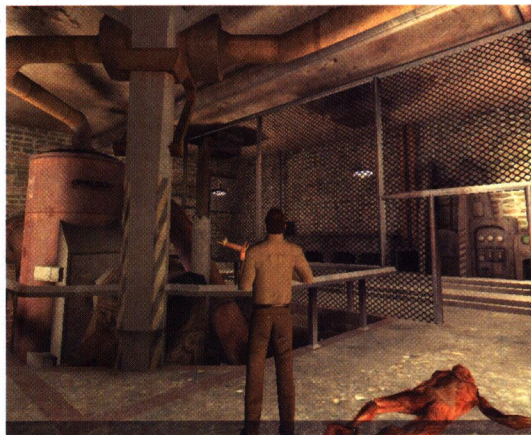
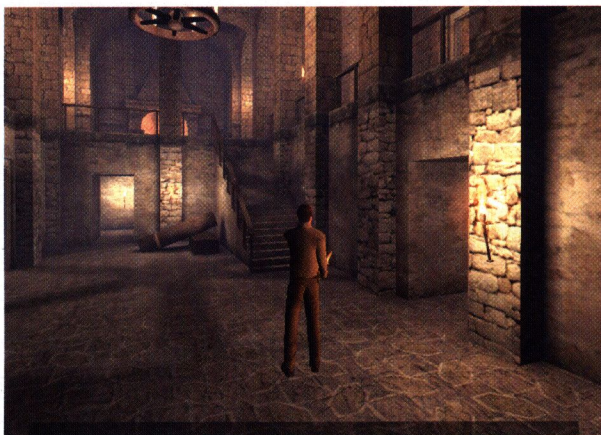
FRANCHISE RAIDER



From the school of thought that says mixing together two previously lucrative ideas is the way to ensure success, comes *Nina: Agent Chronicles*, a shameless blend of *Tomb Raider* and *No One Lives Forever*. It's a LithTech powered third-person action/adventure, it's from the makers of *Schizm* and it's due later this year.

Feeling so bohemian

Horror action approaches flashpoint in *Nefandus*



The developer promises "a game perfect in every respect." Hmm. Discover horrors slumbering in the Earth. And kill them.

A BIT LIKE THE plain girl at school who comes back from summer break with a fantastic set of breasts, a drab little game called *Nefandus: The Wrath Of Angels* has grabbed our attention with a set of screenshots that make earlier batches look positively flat. Originally announced early last year, *Nefandus* at first seemed like just another dark and dismal horror-themed action/adventure with a gothic bent, but the latest images tell a different story. Hugely detailed environments, atmospheric lighting, a nice variety of settings (military base, mines, medieval village, alien craft)... it's all shaping up rather well.

The reason *Nefandus* has blossomed so pleasingly may have something to do with the fact that developer Black Element Software was acquired some months ago by Bohemia Interactive Studio (*Operation Flashpoint*). The *Nefandus* team is officially only working 'under the direction' of BIS, but as they are located in the same offices we can safely assume that the full weight of Bohemia's expertise is being brought to bear on this project.

The storyline too has been overhauled, with the hero, originally pitched as a priest, now replaced by a half-demon, half-man

figure. The plot still focuses on the occurrence of a supposed miracle in a small mountain village, the ensuing investigation of which unleashes a host of ancient and alien horrors from beneath the Earth. Cue some one-man army type heroics and a lot of bloodshed, along with a bit of puzzle solving and exploration through 70-plus levels. Nothing earth shattering there, but with BIS on the case, anything could happen.

Black Element Software • ETA Q1 2003 •
www.blackelement.com

This means war

A new age, a new (3D) empire, in *Cossacks II*

"The most significant (if not surprising) change is that *Cossacks II* is fully 3D"

THE ORIGINAL *Cossacks*, though a bit of a blatant *Age Of Empires* clone, was a rocking RTS with a nice engine and massive unit-count, and we've been waiting for some time to get a look at the inevitable sequel. By the time you read this, developer GSC Game World will have shown its hand at E3, including early work on *Cossacks II*, but they gave us a sneaky pre-E3 peak just the same.

Subtitled *Napoleonic Wars*, the sequel winds the clock forward slightly from the first game to cover European conflicts from the 16th to 19th centuries, with particular focus on the Napoleonic Wars. Ten European nations will be playable in six single-player campaigns, encompassing a variety of actual historical battles, such as Waterloo and Napoleon's invasion of Russia.

The game also promises much greater strategic depth, with a greatly expanded list of troop formations and tactical responses, as well as an extensive new diplomacy system.

However, the most significant (if not surprising) change is that *Cossacks II* is fully 3D. While this has



Early experiments with the 3D engine are bordering on the Freudian.

obvious ramifications for gameplay – greater strategic use of terrain, true line of sight, realistic projectile ballistics, etc – early impressions are that little of the scope and detail that marked the first game will be lost in the translation. Indeed, the new engine is said to allow an estimated 32,000 units on a map simultaneously. Which is one hell of a lot of Cossacks.

GSC Game World • ETA End 2003 •
www.gsc-game.com/index.html





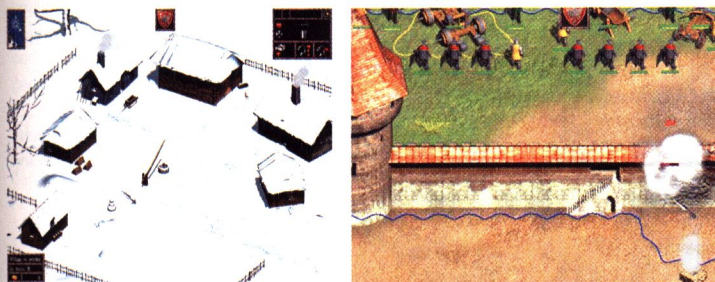
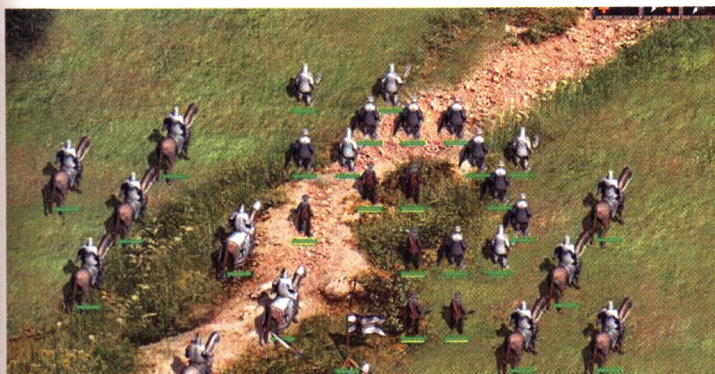
All the joys of historical re-enactment without the dry-cleaning bill.

Hard day's knight

Kill, maim and brush up on your history, in *Knights Of The Cross*

TURN-BASED STRATEGY is undergoing a bit of a resurgence at the moment, with more and more developers recognising the number of strategy gamers out there for whom real-time is not a natural progression. At the more hardcore end of this wave is *Knights Of The Cross*, a 15th century battlefield-based game that trades a lot more on historical accuracy and time-honoured gameplay than graphics or innovation – so unless you're a hardcore war-scarred strategy general you might want to turn the page now... Still with us? OK, in that case you'll no doubt be rapt to hear that *Knights Of The Cross* is the first strategy game to focus on the 15th century battle between the Polish Kingdom and the Teutonic Order, and features 102 battle scenarios, 46 skirmish maps and positively handfuls of authentic weapons and units from the time. Not only this, but there's no diplomacy to worry about, no base building and no resources to manage (apart from your troops of course, and the gold spent equipping and reinforcing them), so it's all about classic battlefield manoeuvring (albeit on a very small scale). Expect a review next issue.

Freemind/Cenega • ETA July • www.knights.cenega.com



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SHORTS

STUNT CAR REDUX



Geoff Crammond's *Stunt Car Racer* is one of the most revered racing games ever created. Slovakian developer Mayhem Studios recently announced an ambitious attempt to recreate the magic of that game, with *Stunts: Final Stage*. Offering both racing and extensive track-building options, the game is scheduled for mid next year.

CIVILEXTENSION



Boldly assuming that there are people out there with enough time on their hands to have completed the original game, Firaxis has announced an expansion pack to Sid Meier's latest strategy epic in the form of *Civilization III: Play the World*. The turn-based add-on boasts eight new civilisations, new single and multiplayer scenarios and a new 'turnless' online mode.

HOLLYWOOD TO THE MAX



Plans for a big budget *Max Payne* movie took a step closer to fruition recently with the signing of a scriptwriter to the project. The writer in question is Shawn Ryan, creator of hit cop *The Shield*, said to be one of the most gritty and mature US TV series in years. There's no word yet as to a possible release date.

ROGUE SEQUEL



Real War: Rogue States is the newly announced sequel to Rival Interactive's military training tool-turned-unremarkable isometric RTS, *Real War*. Few details are available at this stage, though US publisher Simon & Schuster Interactive lists the release date as September 2002. Then again they also call the game *Rogue States*, so what would they know?

Crafting the future

A recent playtest of *Warcraft III* reveals a revolution in the making



Fusing RPG and RTS elements is ambitious.



Warcraft III put the focus well and truly back on the single-player experience.

THE RETURN OF the biggest name in fantasy RTS is just around the corner – *Warcraft III: Reign Of Chaos*, the latest epic from RTS masters Blizzard Entertainment, in glorious 3D for the first time. There was never any doubt that it was going to be big, but it was only when we got our hands on the latest single-player code that we realised just how important this game stands to be for the RTS genre.

If you've been following the progress of this oft-delayed game, you'll know that Blizzard always planned to incorporate a strong RPG aspect to the gameplay. As time went on, and the screenshots started to look more and more like a normal real-time strategy game, it seemed this idea had fallen by the wayside.

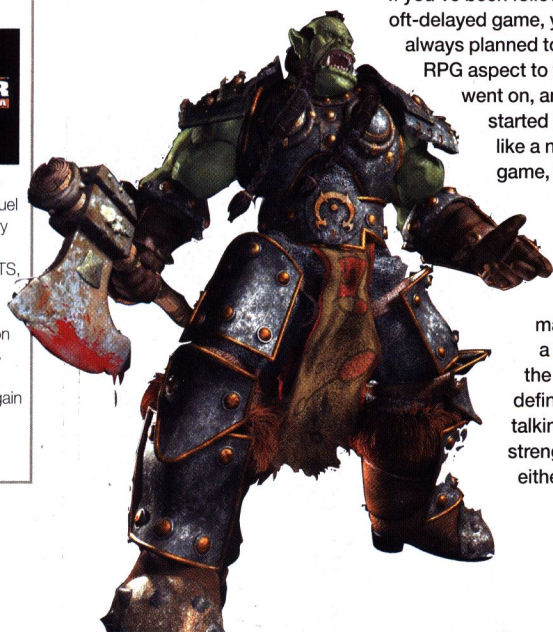
However, while Blizzard has opted for a fixed isometric-style perspective, making the game function a lot like a traditional RTS, the RPG elements are definitely there. We're not just talking units that gain strength from battle to battle either – every second RTS

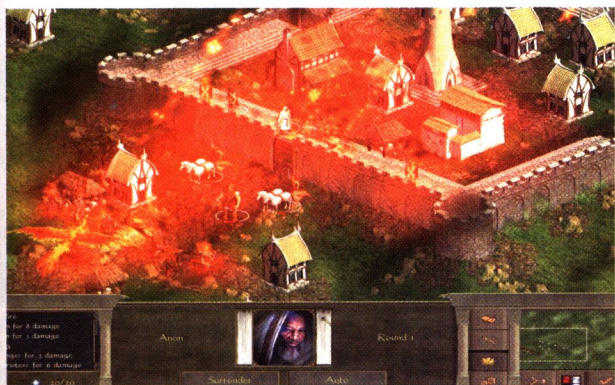
does this and claims 'RPG elements' – *Warcraft III* is a true hybrid. What's more, it seems to work... brilliantly.

The main change to the RTS formula is that you now spend much of your time controlling a central 'hero' character. You still build bases, mass troops, collect resources and so forth, but you also take your hero on side-quests, explore new areas, chat with NPCs, level up, find treasure and special items. Plus there's a strong storyline, propelled through cut-scenes and conversations, just as in any RPG. And yet at the same time *Warcraft III* is a highly evolved RTS, with four playable races, deep tactical options and all the usual finesse you expect from a Blizzard RTS. Not to mention an exhaustively tested multiplayer game and a world editor so powerful that Blizzard honcho Bill Roper estimates it would take "a little over a week or two" to recreate the entirety of *Warcraft III* in the *Warcraft III* engine.

Of course, being told all this and seeing it all come together in practice are two different things. Suffice it to say that our brief brush with *Warcraft III* has left us deeply concerned for the future of the 2D RTS.

Blizzard Entertainment • ETA Q3 2002 • www.blizzard.com/war3





Each of the seven spheres of magic offers vastly different spells.

Malice in wonderland

Every little thing you do is magic, in *Age Of Wonders II*

IF YOU'RE TALKING turn-based fantasy games of the late '90s, the original *Age Of Wonders* can be accused of being just as derivative and samey as most of its contemporaries. However, we recently had a chance to sample the latest beta code for *Age Of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne*, and we're happy to report that it's looking like a much more rounded and satisfying experience.



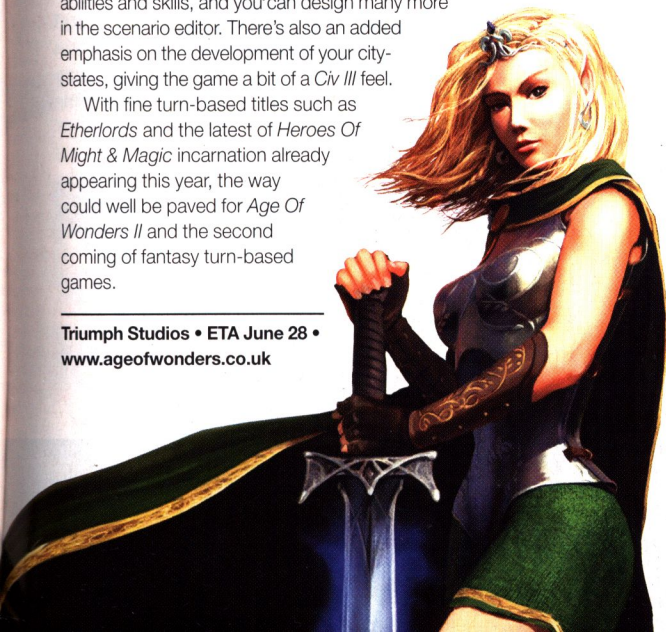
Smite them with your wand.

For starters, there's a much greater emphasis on magic in the sequel, which sees you taking the role of a powerful wizard king. Your arsenal grows throughout the game and takes in some truly spectacular and innovative spells, with an impressive strategic depth offered by the interaction between different schools of magic.

Starting the game as promising young magician Merlin, the single-player campaign challenges you to conquer the seven realms of magic. As you work your way through the realms of fire, earth, life, death, water, air and cosmos, using one of 12 distinct races, your heroes will obtain skills and spells from each sphere. There are more than 30 champions who can join your cause, each possessing unique abilities and skills, and you can design many more in the scenario editor. There's also an added emphasis on the development of your city-states, giving the game a bit of a *Civ III* feel.

With fine turn-based titles such as *Etherlords* and the latest of *Heroes Of Might & Magic* incarnation already appearing this year, the way could well be paved for *Age Of Wonders II* and the second coming of fantasy turn-based games.

Triumph Studios • ETA June 28 • www.ageofwonders.co.uk



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EMULATION ZONE

Stuart Campbell reports from a world where no platform is out of reach

GREAT GAMES YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

ALL OR NOTHING (ABBEX, ZX SPECTRUM, 1984)

ARE YOU SAD THAT the mighty *GoldenEye* never made it to the PC? Casting an envious eye at your PS2-owning chums as they sit through the endless cut-scenes of *Metal Gear Solid 2*? Then get a grip of yourself, *PC ZONE* reader. While console gamers can play pale 10th-generation copies, you have at your disposal the original action stealth game – *All Or Nothing*. More than a decade before *GoldenEye*, *All Or Nothing* invented the entire stealth genre on the humble 48K Speccy. Set in a secret installation on a remote island, your job was to infiltrate the base, steal some vital plans and make good your escape. But what really made the game was the groundbreaking AI, whereby the enemy guards (and dogs) actually behaved in a believable manner that still puts some modern PC games to shame.

Blow something up to create a diversion while you try to pick a door lock. Shoot a couple of guards and watch the rest gather round in horror. Stun a man with knockout gas and steal



You know what to do with a safe and a gun, don't you?

his ID card to wander around the camp unmolested – until you start to do something suspicious, or another enemy discovers the body you stole it from. Run in terror as a pack of guard dogs swarms around your feet to delay you until the soldiers arrive. Bribe guards to turn a blind eye to your nefarious activities, with money stolen from their dead comrades. And you only get one life. It's just like being a real spy, viewers. Just don't ask me how I know.

All Or Nothing got pretty mixed reviews when it was released. It was a little sophisticated for its time, and even 18 years ago the graphics were pretty crude, and it disappeared without ever troubling the chart compilers. But it's one of the most accessible, atmospheric and addictive games ever created in 32K of memory. What's more, it plays faultlessly on any of the leading Speccy emulators (Z80, GLECK, ZX Plus, etc).

So, if you think you can lower yourself to playing a game with less than 46 control keys (*AON* gets by on left, right, forward, select and use), and if you're not so used to lazy quick-saving that you can't handle the tension of a game where one bullet can end it all, then sinister spy shenanigans don't come much more fun than this.

LINKS

www.worldofspectrum.org – World of Spectrum
www.emuunlim.com – Links to ZX Spectrum emus



Because you want to be home in time for *EastEnders*.

BANSHEE (CORE DESIGN, CD32, 1994)

FOLLOWING ON FROM the Mega CD emulation of *Silpheed* we covered a few months ago, the other unsuccessful CD-based games machine of the early '90s has come under the emulation microscope. Yep, we're talking about the Commodore

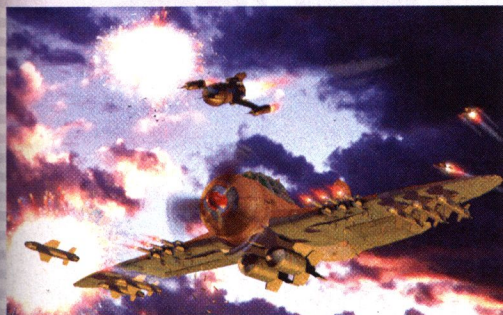
CD32, the ill-fated attempt to turn the Amiga into a SNES-and-Megadrive-beating console, and the first (and so far only) games machine ever to be launched without a single game being available for it. Leading Amiga emulator WinUAE

recently added support for the CD32 (and its predecessor the CDTV), and while it's at an early stage you can get some decent results, assuming you were ever insane enough to own some CD32 games in the first place. The only one really worth having was Core Design's *Banshee*, a fab 1942-style vertically-scrolling shoot

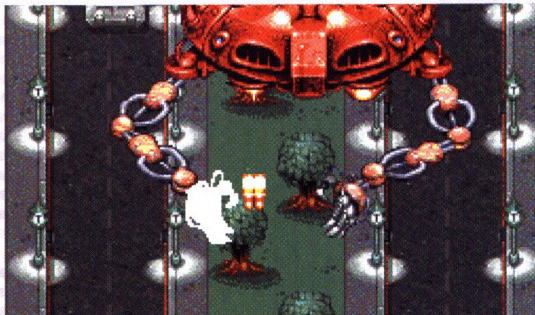
'em up, but there were a few others (including Tony Crowther's 3D proto-RPG *Liberation*), and the up-side is you can find CD32 games in your local game store bargain bin for no more than 50p a shot.

LINKS

www.winuae.net – WinUAE homepage



A game you never played on a console nobody bought...



Admire those early '90s shiny metal textures.



NB. Don't write to us if you have played it...

SHORTS

SUPER
MICHAEL KART

Ridiculous as it may sound, publisher JoWood recently announced a game called *Michael Schumacher Racing World Kart 2002*. Sadly, it's not a game featuring Michael, his brother and their mushroom-headed pals driving round a cartoon track firing turtle shells at each other, but a serious racer based on super kart racing, the sport that kicked off Schumacher's unsporting motorsporting career. Promising "realistic kart physics and a variety of accurate karts ranging from 100, 125 and 150cc", the game is being developed by Paraworld, and is due at the end of June.

EAT DIRT



Aussie racing specialist Rattbag Games is hard at work on a follow up to their popular dirt-based titles *Dirt Track Racing* and *Dirt Track Racing: Sprint Cars*, to be called *Dirt Track Racing 2*. Once again giving you the chance to drive stock to late model cars around a variety of dirt beds, the new game will feature a greater variety of tracks including ovals, D-ovals, tri-ovals, egg shaped and figure-8 tracks. Promising "ultra-realistic physics, true-to-life graphics and three classes of cars", the game is tipped for an autumn release.

X MACHS THE SPOD



A new flying game has emerged from flight sim boffins Just Flight, dubbed *Xtreme Air Racing*. Based on the "world's fastest motorsport", the game is a recreation of some sort of aerial insanity that takes place annually at Reno Nevada, in which super-charged 3000 horsepower aircraft race around pylons 50 feet off the ground. Due mid-June, the game promises 15 courses and eight-way multiplayer action, combat and stunt-based modes and exhaustively realistic flight physics.

For more info check out www.xtremeairracing.com.

From Oleg with love...

The *IL-2 Sturmovik* boys are back to redefine another genre



Tanks, guns, infantry, minefields, APC, aircraft – all the ingredients for an epic battle.

AFTER WORKING HIS magic on the utterly fantastic *IL-2 Sturmovik*, Russian developer Oleg Maddox has become something of a guru in war-gaming circles. He has now set his sights on something completely different – an as yet unnamed RTS going under the ingenious working title *World War II RTS*. Dime a dozen you might be saying, but just check out the screenshots and you'll see that this is no ordinary battlefield simulation.

While most game genres have pushed the boundaries of both gameplay and looks forward in a fairly steady fashion, the evolution of WWII strategy games has been a stop-start affair. The first true WWII-based PC strategy game was released way back in 1982 with the virtual troops and hexes of *Tigers In The Snow: The Battle Of The Bulge*. And the fascination of hexes stuck with WWII strategy games for the next 18 years. True, the graphics involved were revolutionised by *Panzer General* but it wasn't until the seminal *Sudden Strike* that WWII strategy games left their hex heritage behind and became a true RTS affair. And *Sudden Strike* did something that no other WWII strategy game had managed to do – it topped the charts, and everyone went wild.

But two years on, very little has changed. *Sudden Strike II* is looking, well, much like *Sudden Strike*. Close Combat got stagnant and veteran developer SSI seems

to have put the *Panzer General* series on hold. Which leaves a nice gap in the market. One that Oleg Maddox and his team at 1C in Moscow are eager to fill.

The first thing you'll notice from the screenshots is that the level of detail is staggering. Grass that actually looks like grass, tanks correct down to the last rivet, buildings that collapse convincingly under fire and some of the nicest smoke effects we've ever seen.

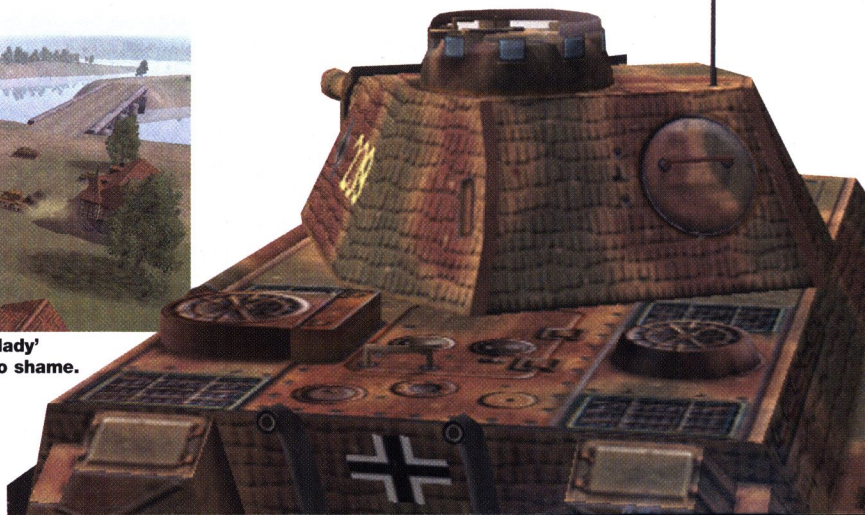
If anything, gameplay promises to be even more detailed. Covering most of the major battles of World War II from 1941-1945, you'll be put in control of tanks, APCs, field guns, mortars, infantry regiments and aircraft. On top of this will be introduced human resource management and individual troop control. You may knock out an anti-tank gun, but unless you drive the troops out they can still give you a hard time.

Still, there are a lot of unanswered questions. How will this close-up detail work in a full-sized battle? How are they going to handle troop replenishment, vehicle repairs and re-arming? How will the multiplayer work, if at all? The short answer is 'they don't know yet', so for now all we can do is drool at the screenshots and pray they get it right.

1C Maddox Games • ETA Mid 2003 • www.1c.ru



Cutting edge 'in your face old lady' graphics to put many an FPS to shame.



Playing for keeps

It's not a mirage, it's *Stronghold: Crusader*



Crusader will feature 25 new units, including Teutonic knights, grenadiers and Arabian swordsmen.



IT'S TIME TO leave behind the rolling green hills of England, the gentle lowing of cows, to journey to a distant land – a land of fire, sand and men with curvy weapons. Yes, it's time for a crusade, with the announcement of *Stronghold: Crusader*, sequel to last year's medieval castle building sim *Stronghold*.

Building castles is still the order of the day, but this time there's a bit of a holy war going down, and you're in charge. Playing through four different campaigns as either Richard the Lionheart or Saladin, the Sultan of Syria, the emphasis will be much the same as *Stronghold* – build and defend impregnable fortresses and assault those of your neighbours until they vainly beg for mercy.

Once again you'll be facing a variety of computer lords with their

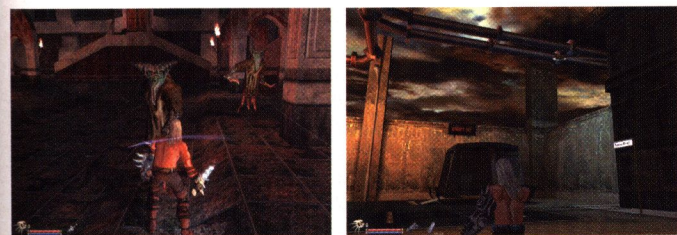
own character and warfare style, which you'll have to suss out and adequately defend against. But because of the new environment you'll need to adapt your tactics around the desert climate with its lack of water and the ever-present threat of fire.

From the initial information *Crusader* doesn't sound all that different from *Stronghold*, and considering that it's using the same engine and has been put together in under a year, it does smack a bit of an expansion dressed up as a sequel. Nevertheless, we loved the first game and our bucket and spade skills could definitely go a few more rounds, so from our part of the beach this sequel is no bad thing.

FireFly Studios • ETA Summer 2002 • www.crusader.godgames.com

Dark angel

Wreak vengeance most holy, in *Archangel*

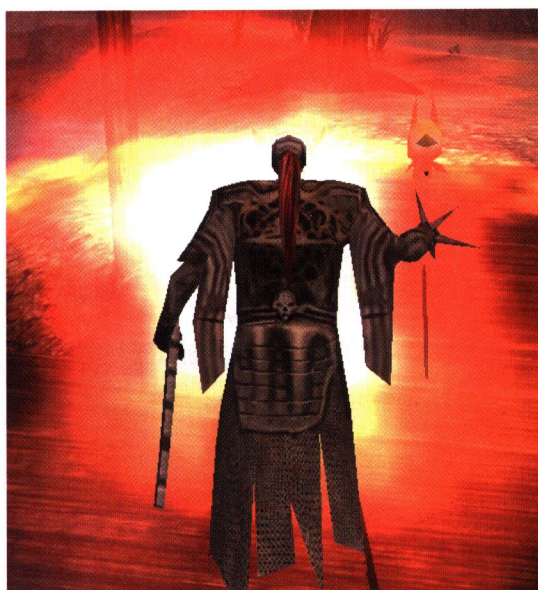


Your character definitely has a bit of Kain (*Blood Omen*) about him.

AT FIRST GLANCE, the fantasy-themed action/adventure *Archangel* looks a little like a poor man's *Soul Reaver 2*. Pseudo-medieval environments, magical transformations, a mixture of hack 'n' slash combat and spell casting – it's a road we've been down many times. However, a recent brush with some early beta code has revealed something a bit more promising. *Archangel* is a formulaic game in some respects, but one that feels a lot more like a PC game than most action-adventure efforts, and for that reason alone is worthy of attention.

For starters, the standard third-person perspective is complemented by a handy first-person view, which proves indispensable when targeting ranged weapons, but is also workable enough to be used throughout the game if you're a first-person junkie. The game also offers the choice between three character classes: panther, ghost and warrior, though the specifics of each has yet to be revealed.

Another similarity to *Soul Reaver 2* is revealed in the time travel aspect of the game, which sees you hopping from the Middle Ages



As an avenging angel, a show of fire and brimstone is vital.

to futuristic Berlin to the horror-tinged 'City Of Evil'. Aside from breaking up the monotony of medieval mud and squalor, skipping between the three epochs also enables a far greater variety of weapons, with everything from cudgel to futuristic assault rifle making its way into your arsenal.

Graphically *Archangel* is no better or worse than many of its contemporaries, but with its promise of depth and distinct made-for-PC vibe, it may just come up roses.

Metropolis Software • ETA Q3 2002 • www.metropolis-software.com

SHORTS

ZIDANE FOOTIE



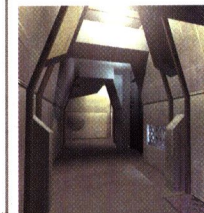
The PC is in desperate need of a decent football game, and the latest contender is *Zidane Football Generation 2002*. A 3D footie game built on the capable Renderware engine, *Zidane Football* will feature 14 stadiums, 70 teams and unique AI for each player – said to react differently depending on the strategy of the opponent. The French and Real Madrid captain has lent not only his name but his motion capture talents to the game, which will offer a variety of modes including World Cup, club league and Zidane Career mode. It's on shelves in June at a budget price of £25.

SOLE SURVIVOR



The third-person stealth action game formerly known as *C.O.N.S.E.A.L.* has re-emerged as *K. Hawk – Survival Instinct*. Now approaching completion at German developer Simillis (*Beam Breakers*), it's a sneaky action-adventure game that puts you in the shoes of Lieutenant Kitty Hawk, a feisty young thing who finds herself fighting for survival on a remote Pacific island. The new name comes just weeks before the game's release, currently set at June 7. Expect a review next issue.

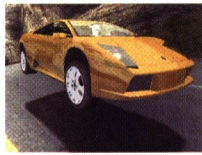
ALIEN SIGHTING



Abducted is a sci-fi survival horror game set in a massive and decaying alien mothership. Promising an immersive horror environment and a minimal interface, the game is built around a standard mixture of puzzle-solving, action and exploration. The developer, Contraband Entertainment, is better known as a Mac conversion house, but also boasts most of the team responsible for original title *Myth III: The Wolf Age*. The game is still at a very early stage, and we'll take a closer look when there's more to see than empty corridors.

SHORTS

SMOKEY RIDES AGAIN



What started out as just another arcade racing series became something much more interesting with the third game in EA's popular *Need For Speed* series, *NFS III: Hot Pursuit*. The mega-publisher/developer has now seen sense enough to continue this thread of the series with its next venture, *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2*. Announced late last year for PS2, the game has now been confirmed for PC, and is set to revive the compelling cops and robbers dynamic of its predecessor, along with a new Top Cop career mode. The game is scheduled for a late summer release.

STRIKE ACTION



Strike Fighters: Project 1 is the latest flight sim from acclaimed game designer Tsuyoshi Kawahito, the man behind such aerial outings as *Jane's Longbow 2* and *European Air War*. His latest game takes the action back to the '60s, a time when aviation technology was still relatively primitive, and in-your-face dogfighting was still the order of the day. Focussing on aircraft such as the F-4 Phantom II and F-104 Starfighter, the new jet combat game is scheduled for release by Strategy First in late summer. Details at www.thirdwire.com.

HERO TO ZERO



In further Strategy First news, this time from their internal development division, it seems the promising tactical FPS *Zero-G Marines* has been put on indefinite hold following internal restructuring. Blending traditional FPS combat with a *Ghost Recon*-style tactical interface and *Forsaken*-style zero-G conditions, the game was to take place around various space stations. Strategy First insists that the game has not been canned, and that development will resume at another studio at an unspecified date in the future.

Absolute power

Challenge the might of the Gods in *The Planes Of Power*

WHILE IT MAY be queuing on borrowed time now that *EverQuest II* is out in the open (see page 10), the world's most successful online world clearly has some life in it yet. Just to hammer this point home, Sony Online virtually coincided its EQ2 bombshell with the announcement of a fourth expansion to 'old' Norrath, dubbed *The Planes Of Power*.

Following on from the three previous expansions, *The Ruins Of Kunark*, *The Scars Of Velious* and *The Shadows Of Luclin*, the new add-on will introduce 18 new game zones as well as hundreds of items, quests and monsters. However, as home to the Gods of Norrath, the Planes Of Power are not for the EQ rookie, and all but one of the zones is to be restricted to players of level 46 or higher.



The one remaining zone, the Plane of Knowledge, is designed as a hub city in which players can find new quests and seek information, as well as acting as a convenient shortcut between existing game areas.

But probably the most significant change to the game is revealed in Sony's promise of "further character progression making players even more powerful".

While Sony couldn't be nailed down on specifics at the time of writing, this seems to be a clear indicator that the experience level cap, currently fixed at 60, is to be extended. Good news for hardcore players then, though casual players may be a little miffed over the focus on higher level content. Let the backlash commence.

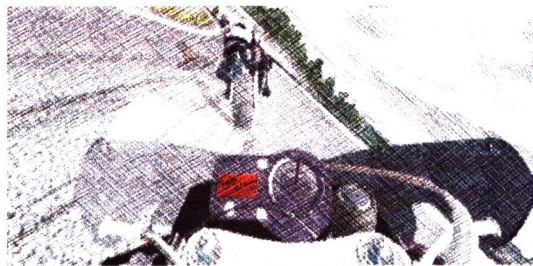
Verant/Sony Online Entertainment •
ETA autumn • everquest.station.sony.com/power



Sony is scrambling to stay one step ahead of *EverQuest* power players.

On your bike

Climax's new motorbike game promises style and substance



LET'S FACE IT, you're never going to see a motorbike game in our Games That Changed The World section. A driving game perhaps – *Stunt Car Racer* or *Colin McRae Rally* are certainly contenders – but not a bike game. Most of them are crap, and even the ones that aren't tend to blur into one another after a while.

Local developer Climax hopes to change all that with its latest effort, *Moto GP: Ultimate Racing Technology*. Apart from looking exceedingly shiny and hopefully being a bit of fun, it will at the very least be remembered as 'the one with all the cool unlockable modes'. Basically, Climax stumbled upon a load of interesting visual effects during the development of the game and decided to cultivate them into playable cheat modes. So, if you're good enough, you'll be able to unlock such joys as wireframe mode, cartoon mode, sketch mode, embossed mode or even the elusive 'umbrella girl' mode. Apart from being an extra incentive to progress through the extensive career game, these stylised rendering techniques are a refreshing respite from the obstinate photo-realism usually associated with motorsports titles.

However, if such gimmickry impresses you not, there's plenty more going on in this game. Such as the experience point system for rider improvement, the six game modes, including arcade, time trial and GP, and the advanced vehicle and environmental damage system. And for actual motor racing fans, all the bikes and riders from the real Moto GP series are included in the game, along with ten officially licensed real-world tracks. Review next issue.

Climax has tried to strike a balance between realism and ease of play.

Climax • ETA June • www.climax.co.uk



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the hotel of your dreams from 19 different hotel types across some of the 23 exotic locations

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your ideal hotel using over 400 interior décor items such as lights, wallpaper and carpets in each of the 8 configurable room styles including Restaurants, Gyms, Bars and Guest Rooms

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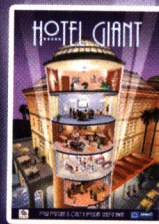
your guests as they eat, drink, sleep and enjoy themselves in your hotel complex. Find out what they like and dislike and develop your hotel to meet their needs

Manage

your business to run efficiently, hiring and training staff, developing advertising campaigns, deciding upon room prices and much more



HOTEL GIANT



Innovative gameplay, an intuitive interface and incredible micro-management opportunities combine to make this a hugely enjoyable and entertaining game

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SHORTS

ROLL WITH IT



The original *RollerCoaster Tycoon* may be partly responsible for the flood of tycoon games that currently afflicts the PC games market, but it was nonetheless a brilliant game. Any doubts as to its ongoing popularity can be dispelled by a glance at the US charts this and every month, so it comes as no great surprise that a sequel is on its way this autumn. Again designed by Chris Sawyer, *RollerCoaster Tycoon 2* will feature more of everything, as well as a new scenario editor with which gamers can create their own park challenges and a tuned ride creation system for more control over rollercoasters and scenery.

THE VATZ



The Vatz is the somewhat curious title for a new action/strategy game recently announced by hitherto unknown Canadian developer Beenox. Blending non-stop third-person action with strategy, side quests and a twisting storyline, the game is described as "strategy/puzzle oriented with a role-playing twist." Multiple playable characters will be available, each with unique abilities, and the world will apparently react differently depending on the character you choose. At this stage the game is looking reasonably promising, and more info can be found at www.beenox.com/vatz.

BOOTY CALL



Stuttgart-based developer Spirit has announced a new arcade action game set in the world of piracy and cannibalism, *Voodoo Islands*. Putting you in charge of a fleet of pirate vessels, the game will challenge you to take control of the Caribbean Sea, by defeating and looting various voodoo cannibals, Conquistadors and rival pirates. According to publisher Koch Media, "enemies are capable of intelligent manoeuvres and attack variants, and will take your experience into account and attack accordingly." See www.voodooislands.com for more info.

Return of the snake

New Metal Gear Solid game revealed for PC

THE METAL GEAR SOLID series must rank among the most loved and respected games of all time. While the first MGS game translated poorly to the PC, it was arguably the best game to appear on Sony's world-beating PSone, creating an effortless aura of cool and single-handedly defining the stealth action genre. The big budget follow up took the cinematic splendour of the original to all new heights when it appeared on PS2 late last year, and has remained a thorn in the side of every PC gamer who has argued the benefits of PCs over consoles since.

Just days before we went to press, it was uncovered by our online moles that a new *Metal Gear Solid* game is in development and headed for the PC. Originally thought to be a reworked version of MGS 2 it now appears that it is a totally new game, going under the name *Metal Gear Solid Substance*. The source of the information, a leaked financial document from Konami Japan, lists the title as PC, Xbox and PS2 – the fact that it is targeted to PS2

confirming that this is indeed a completely new project. Plans for a possible online *Metal Gear* game were also uncovered.

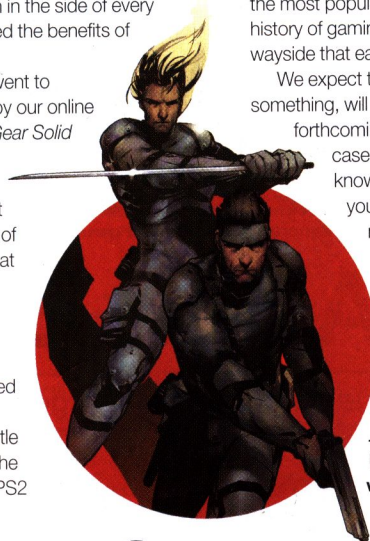
This revelation comes only months after Hideo Kojima, the creative mastermind behind the *Metal Gear* games, declared that MGS 2 would be the last game in the series. Clearly Konami was not willing to let one of the most popular franchises in the history of gaming fall by the wayside that easily.

We expect that all, or at least something, will be revealed at the forthcoming E3 expo, in which

case much more may be known of the title by the time you're reading this. But

needless to say, a second *Metal Gear Solid* game on the PC is very good news indeed for action fans, and we'll be sure to bring you every scrap of information we can find at E3.

Konami • ETA TBC • www.konami.com



Scope for success

LithTech powered FPS Sniper re-emerges from hiding

ANY GAME WAS going to have trouble competing for attention with a new *Metal Gear Solid* game (see above if you missed it), but a LithTech powered FPS from an obscure Slovakian codeshop? It's bordering on cruel.

However, Mayhem Studios' forthcoming shooter *Sniper* is not all bad. The first screenshots that appeared some months ago were laughably poor, but the game seems to have shifted development teams since then, and this latest batch of shots is infinitely better. The version of LithTech being used is the same as that employed in *Aliens Vs Predator 2*, not the ancient version used recently in *Nakotomi Plaza* (reviewed p.84), so it has every chance of looking semi-respectable.

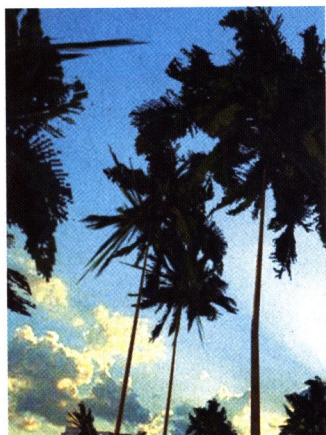
The plot puts you as a certain Dominick, a Mafia hitman sent to investigate some murders of fellow wise guys. As the title suggests, the action concentrates on sniping and setting up ambushes, with direct confrontation with the police or rival gangs likely to end in a swift demise.

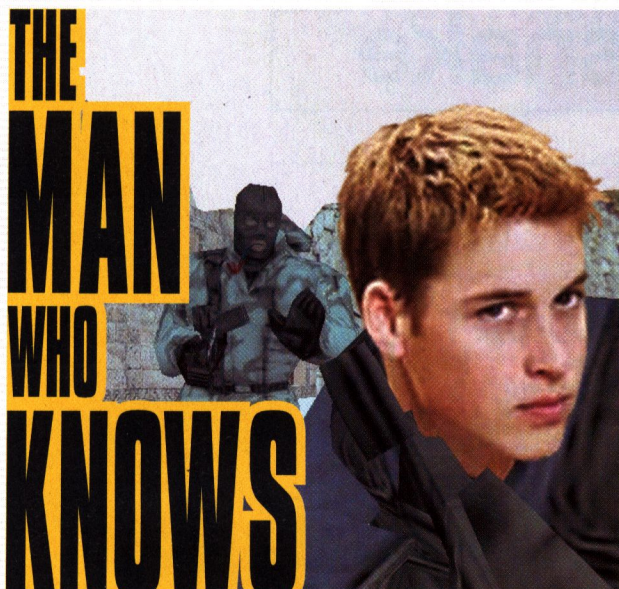
Particularly impressive in the latest screenshots are the incredibly natural sky textures, though we suspect they might be a little too good to be true. The fact that the shadows are falling towards the sun in one shot is not entirely encouraging...

No release date has been set as yet, so all we can suggest is to keep watching the skies.

Mayhem Studios • ETA TBC • www.mayhem.sk

Forget about the gameplay – *Sniper* could be worth playing for the clouds alone.





SICK TERRORISM game *Counter-Strike* turned an innocent teenager into a crazed killer, it is claimed. **Robert Steinhauser** walked into his former school in the German town of **Efurt**, carrying two legally owned firearms and 1,000 rounds of ammunition, and expertly killed 16 people before shooting himself. While some papers chose to highlight his membership of a gun club and alleged satanism, German news magazine *Der Spiegel* pointed to the fact that he played *Counter-Strike* as a decisive factor, suggesting that the black mask and dark clothes he wore were similar to those sported by characters in the game. In the aftermath of the bloodbath, conservative MP **Edmund Stoiber** called for violent games to be banned, thus leaving the German population with even more leisure time to play with their 10 million licensed weapons.

Meanwhile, in gun-crazed **America**, a bill introduced in **Congress** could make it a federal crime to sell or rent violent videogames to minors (or anyone else who works underground). Introduced by US Representative **Joe Baca**, **The Protect Children from Video Game Sex and Violence Act of 2002** would apply to games that feature decapitation, amputation, killing of humans with lethal weapons or through hand-to-hand combat, rape, carjackings,

"Apparently, William 'beat off' a host of other would-be heroes including Robbie Williams, Ant and Dec, Hugh Grant and Steve Redgrave"

aggravated assault, and other violent felonies. Baca blasted: "When kids play videogames, they assume the identity of the characters in the game, and some of these characters are murderers, thieves, rapists, drug addicts, and prostitutes. Do you really want your kids assuming the role of a mass murderer or a carjacker while you are away at work?"

On an unrelated note, **Prince William** has been backed to become the next videogame action hero in one of the most contrived pieces of PR guff ever realised. The nomination is based on the findings of 'research' by a so-called panel of experts, commissioned by high street electrical retailer **Dixons** in order to get their name mentioned in the press. Apparently, William "beat off" a host of other would-be heroes including **Robbie Williams, Ant and Dec, Hugh Grant and Steve Redgrave**. **Kylie Minogue** was also voted the perfect virtual female lead to star alongside the big-toothed royal. **Stuart Carson**, marketing director of Dixons, bleated: "Prince William, who recently passed his motorbike test, is becoming quite the action man. He is an international traveller with dashing looks and seems to be every inch the modern hero. As entertainment continues to converge, it does not seem that far-fetched to cast the likes of Prince William and Kylie in a game together and we'd certainly be interested in developing such a game if either party were interested." Oh, so Dixons is a game developer now, is it?



Next Generation setting, old generation graphics.

A new Enterprise

Starfleet Command III goes next generation

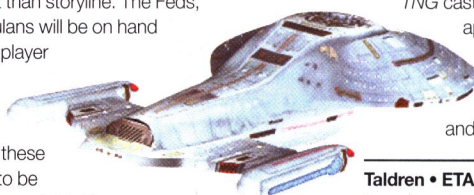
NOW OFFICIALLY THE second biggest games publisher in the world (after EA), Activision has become not only the sole publisher of all things *Star Wars*, but *Star Trek* as well, after stealing away the *Starfleet Command* series from rivals Interplay.

Now set in the *ST: Next Generation* universe, the third instalment of the popular strategy series will follow in much the same vein as its mildly acclaimed predecessors, offering far more in the way of ship combat than storyline. The Feds, Klingons and Romulans will be on hand across three single-player campaigns, with a total of 25 ships available to command. Each of these will of course need to be upgraded with enhanced shields, weapons

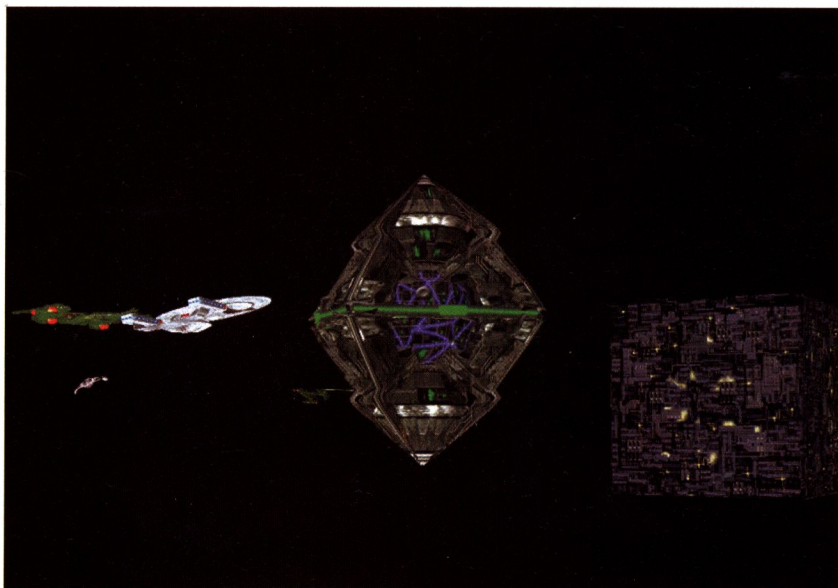
and special equipment, and it goes without saying captains will have to allocate power to ship systems, employ various tactical manoeuvres and direct other ships in the fleet.

New features include experience points for your officers (which will affect the operational abilities in future missions), a streamlined interface, enhanced graphics and a much-expanded persistent online game called *Dynaverse 3*. A few of the *Star Trek*:

TNG cast will be making a vocal appearance too, which is about as surprising as hearing that the game will be released in a box and available from shops.



Taldren • ETA November •
gaming.startrek.com/games/sfc3/



The backgrounds are made up of millions of polygons. They're all black.

New Delta Force...

...but still no sign of Chuck Norris

IN A NOT so shocking move, Novalogic has announced yet another *Delta Force* game, the fifth on PC if you count this summer's *Task Force Dagger*, which is either a standalone mission pack for *Delta Force 3* or a semi-sequel, depending on how you look at it.

Either way, *Delta Force - Black Hawk Down* will again allow you to take control of US Special Forces in the war against all those who threaten freedom, human decency and mom's apple pie. In a first for developer/publisher Novalogic, this latest episode will be based in Somalia, which is perhaps the only country left for *Delta Force* to explore, save Liechtenstein.

The Somali capital Mogadishu was of course the unwilling host of Operation Restore Hope, where George Bush Sr went to war against the local warlords and got promptly whooped - although you wouldn't know it if you've seen Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down*.

"In Operation Restore Hope the men of Task Force Ranger fought a fierce battle in what is now recognised as the war on terrorism," says Lee Milligan, President of NovaLogic. "We dedicate this game to the men who were there, to Delta Force, Rangers and the 160th SOAR. NSDQ." Tugs at the heartstrings, don't it?

It is unknown whether the game will be an officially licensed game based on the film, or less likely, that the game will follow the more factually correct book by Mark Bowden. Whatever the case, the game will allow you to dispatch hundreds of impoverished Africans with extreme prejudice.

If that sounds like your idea of fun, and the *Delta Force* series has never been short on support, the good news is that the game should be ready before Christmas.

Novalogic • ETA November 2002 •
www.novalogic.co.uk



The new *Delta Force* is powered by C4, which is a 3D engine by the way, not an explosive mix of cyclonite, polyisobutylene, di-ethylhexly and motor oil.

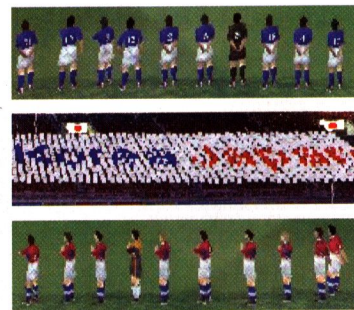
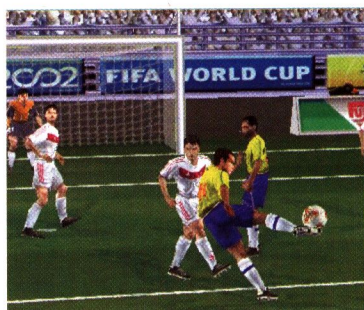
Competition Win the World Cup!

We've got 10 copies of *2002 FIFA World Cup* to give away, with a FIFA footy shirt and football for the lucky first-prize winner

It might be on before most people have woken up but it's still The World Cup and it gives you the perfect excuse to start drinking beer for breakfast. But what are you going to do when it's all over? Eh? Not looking so clever now are you?

As usual we've got things covered. Enter our fantastic competition, courtesy of Electronic Arts, and you can recreate the magic on your PC when the Zidanes and Beckhams of the world have gone home and stopped waving their willies around.

In return we want your help. Our extraordinary lead times make it hard to talk about current events without making total tits of ourselves. Trying to come over all topical by making World Cup predications is a prime example, an egg waiting to land smack on the nose of quality journalism. So we're going to make you do it instead. The quarter-finals start on June 21st, and by that time we want to know who's going to win. First prize is a copy of the best football game on the PC, *2002 FIFA World Cup*, along with a special FIFA footy shirt and football. Nine runners-up will win a copy of the game.

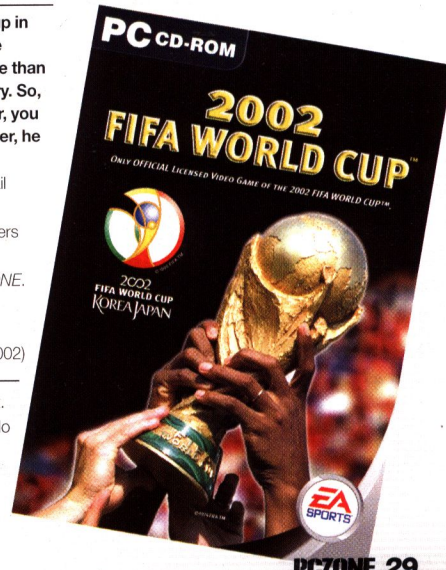


Simply nominate the team you think is going to win the World Cup in 2002 and send your answer on a postcard, along with with all the information requested, to the address below. In the event of more than 10 correct entries we'll use the postmark to pick the earliest entry. So, you can play it safe and get your entry in on deadline, June 21. Or, you can brave it and send us your prediction straight away. Remember, he who dares stands more chance of winning.

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number and email address (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd.
- Please indicate whether or not you are a current subscriber to PC ZONE.

Send your entry to: FIFA World Cup Compo, PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland St, London W1T 4JD. (Closing date: June 21, 2002)

Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

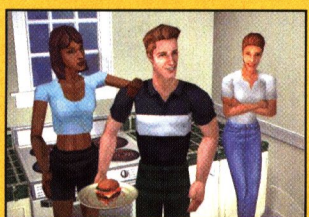
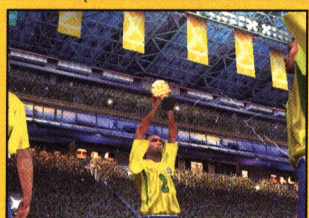
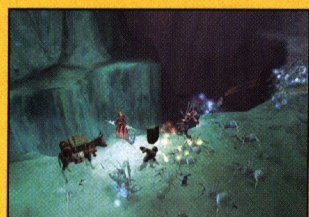


CHARTS

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

Your one-touch guide to game releases past, present and future. Whether a game is lost, looming or selling like sim-cakes, this is where you'll find it





		TITLE	WEEKS IN CHART	SCORE
1	—	THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY	5	66%
2	NEW	DUNGEON SIEGE	3	89%
3	▼	STAR WARS: JEDI KNIGHT II – JEDI OUTCAST	6	91%
4	NEW	2002 FIFA WORLD CUP	2	72%
5	▼	MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT	12	94%
6	▼	THE SIMS: HOT DATE	24	71%
7	▼	THE SIMS	117	86%
8	▼	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02	35	92%
9	▼	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS 3	7	N/A
10	▲	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	7	63%

YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

The Sims is popular, but it doesn't make sense that it always has four places in the top ten. Indie stores aren't counted when they add up the sales, so the results are skewed towards the big chain stores and their sheep-like customers.

guymelef

I picked up *Dungeon Siege* the other day. It looks great and is lots of fun, but a bit simplistic for my liking. Still, I don't reckon anyone would be disappointed if they bought it.

zwan

I can't believe there's another *FIFA* game already. It's kind of OK that they do something for the World Cup, but I reckon it should just be a £5 patch or something.

tonic_trouble

Personally I think *Medal Of Honor* is a bit over-rated. PC gamers just liked it so much because it was tightly scripted and cinematic – good points for sure, but console games have been doing this since *GoldenEye*.

jumpman



megastores

TOP 10

COMPETITION



megastores

- 1 THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY
- 2 DUNGEON SIEGE
- 3 MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
- 4 HOOLIGANS: STORM OVER EUROPE
- 5 STAR WARS: JEDI KNIGHT II – JEDI OUTCAST
- 6 2002 FIFA WORLD CUP
- 7 GLOBAL OPS
- 8 MONSTERS, INC. MINI GAMES
- 9 CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02
- 10 COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

Win the entire Virgin Top 10!

Once again, **PC ZONE** and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Virgin Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following simple question:

QUESTION: What's the name of the development studio responsible for *Dungeon Siege*?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with all the information requested, to the address below.

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Are you a current subscriber to *PC ZONE*?

Answers on a postcard to: **PC ZONE** Chart Compo (CPCZ7A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: June 27, 2002

Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART-TRACK TOP 10

PRECIOUS little movement in the charts this month with just two new entries and typically strong showings from all the usual suspects, namely *The Sims*, *Half-Life* and *Champ Man*. If anything the performance of the latest FIFA release will be a disappointment for publisher EA, but its fortunes are only going to improve as the actual World Cup gets underway – as long as England can hold out at least.

The top-drawer hack 'n' slash action of *Dungeon Siege* cudgels its way into second place, and it will be interesting to see how long it can hold on. It seems reasonable to expect that just about every fan of *Diablo* or *Throne Of Darkness* will rush out and grab this game, but it's not being pushed that hard in advertising terms, and may sink into obscurity like so many other excellent games have done lately.

Like *Warrior Kings*, which has now slipped completely out of the top 20. Incredibly, this leaves the ageing *Cossacks: European Wars* as the highest selling RTS this month, sitting quietly at number 19. Many strategy gamers clearly just aren't ready to embrace the 3D RTS yet, and we suspect only a big name like *Warcraft III* will be able to change this.

Anthony Holden

MISSING IN ACTION

The war's not over until the last game comes home...



Team Factor

WE WERE HOPING to bring you a review of *Team Factor* this month, but instead we're disappointed to report another victim of slippage. It seems that the May completion deadline for this tactical shooter was a bit on the ambitious side, and we're looking at another month or so before we get our hands on the final code. Apparently the game is all but finished, but yet to be optimised for lower spec PCs, in particular the all-important single-player mode. We're assured that it looks superb on a 1.8GHz behemoth, but a bit of time is needed to produce a more realistic minimum spec.

7FX • ETA June/July •
www.teamfactor.co.uk



Necrocid: The Dead Must Die

IT SUFFERED ONE of the most troubled lifespans of any game, but *Necrocid: The Dead Must Die* has finally been laid to rest. In the last 12 months the horror-themed FPS from Novalogic has been delayed, put on hold, cancelled, revived and now cancelled again – for good this time (or so we're told). While the game is known to have suffered from general quality control issues throughout its abortive existence, Novalogic maintains that it was mainly cancelled to put the team on to a new project, which we assume is the newly announced *Delta Force – Black Hawk Down* (see page 27). RIP.

Novalogic • KIA •
www.novalogic.com



Prisoner Of War

THIS THIRD-PERSON stealth 'em up is one of the most eagerly awaited games in the PC ZONE office at the moment, so needless to say we were none too chuffed when we heard it had been thrown back into the cooler until at least autumn. The game was originally slated for a June release, and no reason has been given for the delay. Though the console versions are still pencilled in to ship in June, this is probably good news for PC gamers, as it will grant the chaps at Wide Games a solid three months to optimise and sharpen the game for PC.

Wide Games • ETA autumn •
www.codemasters.com/pow



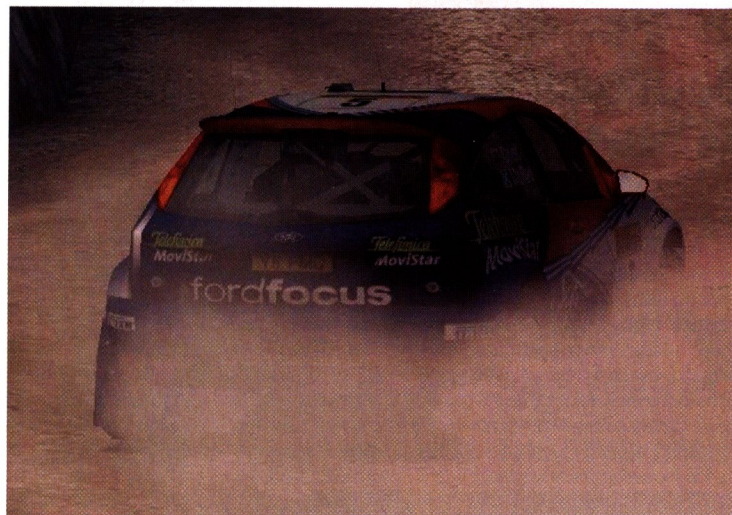
US TOP 10

- 1 THE SIMS: VACATION
- 2 DUNGEON SIEGE
- 3 THE SIMS
- 4 STAR WARS: JEDI KNIGHT II – JEDI OUTCAST
- 5 MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
- 6 THE SIMS: HOT DATE
- 7 ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON
- 8 STARCRAFT: BATTLECHEST
- 9 ZOO TYCOON
- 10 THE SIMS: LIVIN' LARGE

INCOMING!

These are the big games that are going on sale in the next month or so. All dates are correct at the time of going to press, but we'd check ahead before running down to the shops in the driving rain.

GAME	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE
Icwind Dale II	Interplay	May 31
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Ubi Soft	May 31
Spider-Man: The Movie	Activision	June 7
Anno 1503	EA	June 7
Grand Prix 4	Infogrames	June 14
Freedom Force	EA	June 21
Neverwinter Nights	Infogrames	June 21
Op Flashpoint: Resistance	Codemasters	June 21
Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	June 28
Mafia	Take 2	July 19



COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3

I've got Colin Fever, Colin Fever. It's driving me crazy (driving me crazy)...

AS WE ALL KNOW from watching TV and reading the daily papers, the nation is gripped at the moment by a strange new phenomenon, dubbed by one high-profile social critic as 'rally-mania'. Everyone, young and old alike, seems to be playing these new 'rally games', in which the aim is to navigate a man, usually named Colin, around a virtual race track strewn with either mud or snow. It's got to the point where you can't walk down your local high street without seeing a bunch of youngsters decked out in 'Colin Fever' T-shirts and back-packs, tapping their feet to the strains of popular rock 'n' roll tunes such as 'Do the Colin' and munching on 'Big McRaes'.

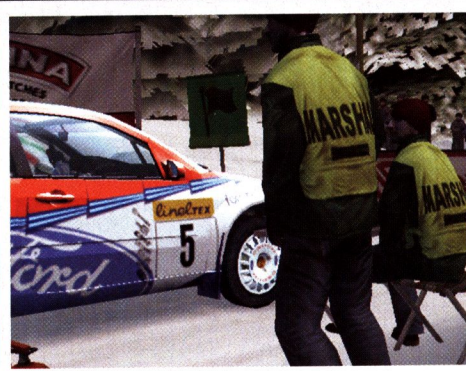
Amid this unstoppable wave of rally fever, it's difficult to recall a time before rally... before Colin. It all started back in early 2000,

with the release of *Colin McRae Rally*, a revolutionary game that made earlier games such as *Space Invaders* look positively primitive. The adventures of Colin were enhanced by the introduction of his wisecracking marsupial side-kick Nicky, who took punters by surprise with one-liners such 'easy left, maybe' and the hilarious 'whoa!' – soon to become a popular catch-phrase among keen rallyites and even used once on the BBC World Service.

While parental groups have rallied hard against the rising tide of rally-mania, pointing to a sharp rise in sideways action on country roads, the phenomenon shows no sign of stopping. Fans are now gearing up for *Colin McRae Rally 3*, the best-looking and most authentic rally game ever. So come on everybody, get ready to 'Do the Colin' one more time!



Codemasters • ETA Christmas 2002 • www.codemasters.com





DEUS EX 2

Deeper than Wittgenstein and a lot better-looking

WE MIGHT HAVE thought *Deus Ex* was near perfect, but Ion Storm has taken a very critical look at it and is working hard at improving every single area for the sequel. As you can see, the graphics, which were such a low priority on the first title, are being given pride of place this time with the use of the latest *Unreal* technology. Not at the expense of anything else though. Most people's criticisms of *Deus Ex* concentrated on AI issues, with enemies behaving stupidly at times in order to keep the difficulty level down. This area is undergoing major improvements, as Ion Storm sets out to create the most realistic and detailed interactive experience in any game yet. The story is still incredibly important of course, but you'll have so much you can do and so much freedom in how you do it you might just spend a few weeks living in the environments and feeling part of a fully realised universe.

As you probably already know, the story is set 15 years after the end of the first game and, while JC Denton will be making

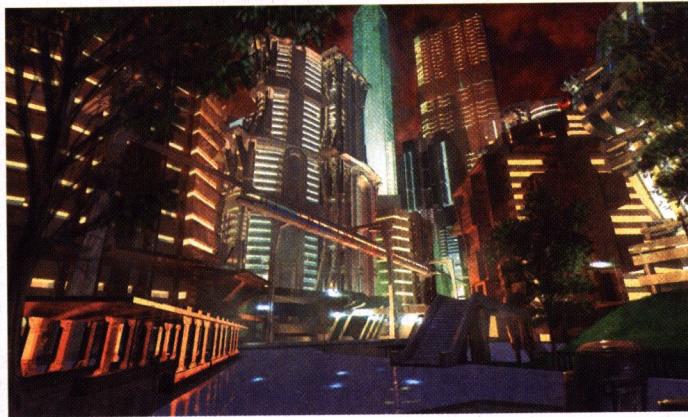
an appearance, you'll take the role of a young male or female character with a whole world to explore – one forever altered by the events of *Deus Ex*.

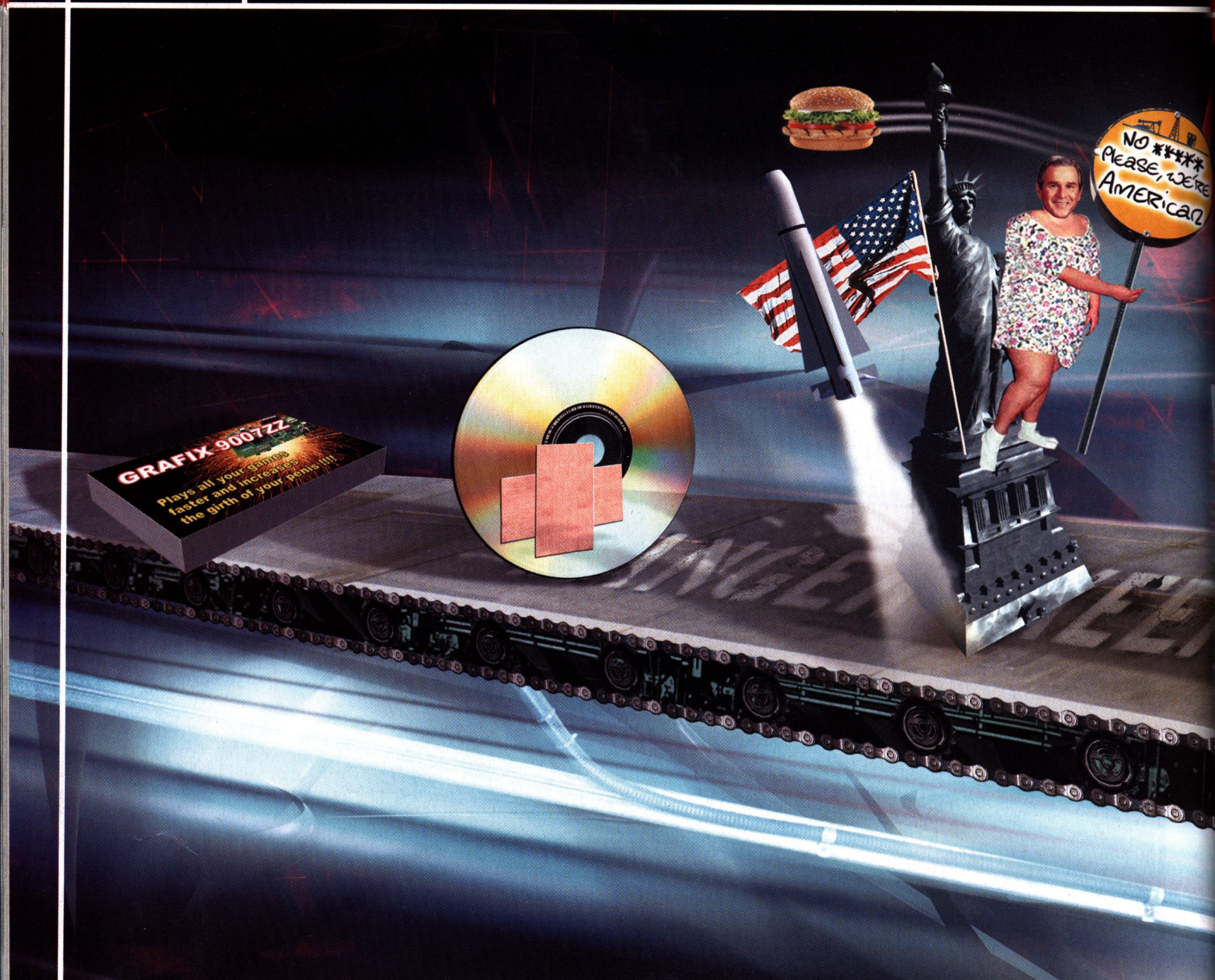
And if you're feeling disappointed about the lack of multiplayer: get over it. There are dozens of great online games in the works already, but the single-player experience *Deus Ex 2* will offer will be totally unique. We guarantee it, and we'll be back with an in-depth preview next issue. **EX**



"The graphics, which were such a low priority on the first title, are being given pride of place"

Ion Storm • ETA June 2003 • www.ionstorm.com





ROOM 101

Hate is good. Well, it is when you can flush that object of hatred down the Orwellian toilet. Adam Phillips offers the industry the chance to vote out its weakest links...

HERE AT PC ZONE, we know all about hate. We could fill pages and pages with things in the PC games industry that we respect about as much as Anne Winterton's speech writer. The slippages; the PR people who, instead of making a hack's life more easy, manage to make it more difficult; Dominik Diamond; overhyped games that deserve to be taken out back and shot; oh, and did we mention game slippages?

So, we reckoned, if we have "issues" then God knows how the rest of the industry must feel. Hence, it only seemed right that we should focus all this disgust into a single therapeutic outpour. A proverbial group hug to purify our fevered minds and put the PC world to rights at the same time.

To this end, we asked four industry experts to vent their wrath, shake their fists in fury and sob violently at the injustices of the world by selecting

three things they would like to see expelled from the PC gaming world. And we got to pick four – because we're **PC ZONE**.

Our Paul Merton substitute (without the bad haircut) is The Man Who Knows. To bring some imbalance and insanity to the proceedings, we've asked him to act as judge, jury and executioner and approve those nominations that should indeed be banished. And spare those that should be spared... for now.



ILLUSTRATIONS Joe Roberts

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

**YOUR HOST...****THE MAN WHO KNOWS****AGE** Unknown**COMPANY** None**POSITION** Bitter industry insider**WORKING ON** Anger management**FAVOURITE PC GAME** Anything that's free**SO WHAT'S IMPORTANT ABOUT HIM?** He launches scathing and frequently unfounded attacks on anyone and everyone in the games industry in his regular column in PC ZONE, The Man Who Knows.* The views of The Man Who Knows do not necessarily coincide with those of PC ZONE

GUEST #1

▲ TV'S IAIN LEE!

AGE 28

COMPANY He's on TV. He's self-employed then...**POSITION** Co-presenter of *Thumb Bandits***WORKING ON** A new sitcom about two gay footballers. And Iain's just finished shooting alongside Angelina Jolie in the movie *Beyond Borders*.
Not bad for a spod, eh?**FAVOURITE PC GAME** *Medal Of Honour: Allied Assault***SO WHAT'S IMPORTANT ABOUT HIM?** Well, we reckon *Thumb Bandits* is the world's first truly decent videogame show and Mr Lee is a 100 per cent confirmed games head, not just some poncey pretender who wants to get his face on the telly. And his nob gags can be quite funny...

"These types look down on consoles as inferior toys built for retarded kids"

IAIN LEE
THUMB BANDIT

THE NOMINATIONS

STAFF IN GAMES HOUSES BEING SO 'HUSH-HUSH'

I've visited many games design offices and they're so bloody secretive. To get in, you have to pass through several security checks while a dour-faced, posh woman looks at you and the film crew with utter contempt.

After being issued with security passes, the dour-faced lady goes in to make sure that there's "nothing you shouldn't see." Once inside, the twats in there are usually worse than useless. Any question is met with one of three answers: "Ah, we can't give away too much about that at the moment/Ah, you'll just have to wait for the game to come out/Ah, I'm afraid that's top secret."

The real reason they can't say anything is because the game isn't finished – these fellas have been so busy snorting coke off the dour-faced lady's arse that they've forgotten to do their jobs.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: There is a tendency for developers to act as if what they're working on is so revolutionary that the most minor disclosure of its details will have a devastating and irreversible effect on the future of mankind. Whereas in fact what they're actually doing is cobbling together some tired piece of shit that no-one in their right mind would ever be interested in were it not for the fact that they're making out that it's some kind of official secret.

VERDICT IN

PLAYING ONLINE WITH TIMEWASTERS

I would guess that about 78 per cent of my PC playing time is online. What could be better than a four hour *Command & Conquer* session against three other people? So imagine how annoying it is when you're about two hours into a game and NAZIKILLER69 suddenly announces: "Sorry guys, I gotta go. Mum says I have school in the morning." This then brings out two sides in everyone that I'd rather not see. The first is that you and the others start begging him to stay: "Oh come on man, I was just about to strike" is a humiliating phrase to type at any time, but to do it to a 15-year-old boy who is using the pseudonym NAZIKILLER69 is almost illegal. But it gets worse. I then revert to the obnoxious 15-year-old I once was and start slinging ridiculous insults. Soon everyone joins in but he still goes. And then they do. What a waste...

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: Not interested. If you're spending four hours playing with children then frankly you deserve all you get. Stop cupping your balls and get yourself down the boozier for a skinful and a fight, you lanky twat. And while you're about it, take those pasta shells off the sides of your head.

VERDICT OUT

ARROGANT BOFFINS

A lot of people shy away from playing PC games. Why? Because most PC gamers are massive dickweeds who get all superior because they've got a f**king keyboard. These types look down on consoles as inferior toys built for retarded kids with limited brainpower. The problem with these people is that they totally miss the point. The important issue is the game. Duh!

Is the game any good? Yes or no? If it's good, I'll play it please. Yes, even on a GameCube. If it's rubbish, I'll file it next to the other crap games I've bought, like *Tachyon* and *Ultima*.

Please don't be snobbish because you have a computer. Sure, some people haven't yet realised that PCs can be fantastic games machines, but they will do. And if they don't, just leave them be. Stop having a go.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: At the risk of alienating our readers, I have to agree. The PC is a great games machine, but that doesn't make console gamers stupid – they can do that perfectly well on their own. That said, give me a PS2, *Pro Evolution Soccer* and ten cans of Tenants Super, and you can keep your tycoon games and your turn-based strategy. Computers do have other important uses though, primarily the downloading and storing of mucky pictures. Nobody ever pulled themselves around the room to a console.

VERDICT IN

"The PC is a great games machine, but that doesn't make console gamers stupid"

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

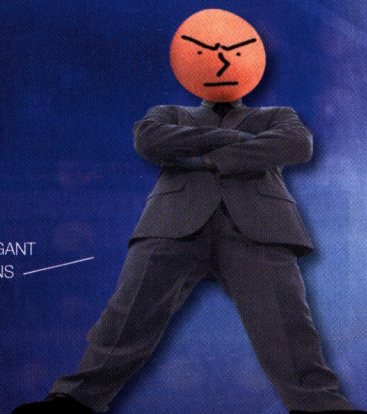


STAFF IN GAMES HOUSES BEING SO 'HUSH-HUSH'



PLAYING ONLINE WITH TIMEWASTERS

ARROGANT BOFFINS



GUEST #2

▲ WARREN SPECTOR

AGE: 46

COMPANY Ion Storm

POSITION Studio Director

WORKING ON *Deus Ex 2: The Invisible War*FAVOURITE PC GAME *Tetris*, *M.U.L.E* and *Ultima IV* among many others

SO WHAT'S IMPORTANT ABOUT HIM? Oh please, do you really need to ask? He's had a hand in a string of benchmark titles – from *Ultima Underworld* and *System Shock* to *Deus Ex*. In other words, he's qualified...



"I'm routinely given credit for having 'created' *Ultima Underworld* but I was 'just' the producer on it"

WARREN SPECTOR
ION STORM, STUDIO DIRECTOR

THE NOMINATIONS

"THINKING ABOUT GAME DESIGN WILL DESTROY THE MAGIC"

You don't want to know how many times I've heard developers say: "You guys think too much," or "If you get too analytical about game design, you will destroy 'The Magic' that makes fun games." What a load of bull. There's no magic about making games. An instinctive approach to game design may have worked for the lone wolves who made the first games but nowadays we have to take a more rigorous approach to what we do. The risks of development are too great to trust to luck, and the need to communicate a singular vision to multiple team members demands that we understand and be able to articulate what we're doing and why.

Far from robbing the development process, thoughtful analysis can ensure that we know why we're making the design decisions we make, point us toward the 'right' decisions and help us avoid making bad ones.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: I'm sorry Warren, you're thinking too much, and I have absolutely no idea what you're on about. You seem pretty incensed though so I'll let you put this in Room 101, as long as you throw your beard in with it. There are far too many chin-gloves in this business for my liking.

VERDICT IN (On the proviso you familiarise yourself with a razor.)

INDIVIDUALS AS BRAND NAMES (OR 'AUTHORSHIP IN GAMING')

I'm as into ego strokes as the next guy and it's really flattering to have people associate my name with great games, but it's just amazing to me the amount of individual attention I and some other game developers get these days. Teams routinely consist of 20 people or more and game development is so intensely collaborative that saying "so-and-so was the creator of Game X" is just nuts. I'm routinely given credit for having "created" *Ultima Underworld* but I was "just" the producer on it. Ditto for *System Shock*, another game I made all by myself, if you believe the press and the fans.

I wish we could keep the focus on games or, at least, teams, rather than individuals. Unfortunately, the needs of commerce, the undeniable power of branding and the competitive nature of game publishing and promotion make that a dream that's unlikely to be realised.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: Three words: John Romero's *Daikatana*. A level designer elevated to the status of rock star on the basis of playing a bit of *Doom*, having hair down to his arse crack and cruising round Dallas in a yellow car, drinking Dr Pepper while Eidos pisses money into a black hole. Having said that, it's lucky his name was on the game, as no other idiot would claim responsibility for it.

VERDICT IN

"I WANT IT GREAT, I WANT IT GROUNDBREAKING, I WANT IT ON TIME AND UNDER BUDGET."

You'd think publishers would notice that most really great games are at least a little late and over budget. You'd think that knowledge would result in some risk-management strategies that acknowledge the trade-offs inherent in any research-oriented, technology-driven entertainment business. You'd think all that but, in most cases, you'd be wrong.

The number of publishers who don't understand this is amazing. Publishers always blame developers for being liars or fools. That leads to developers who hate publishers and publishers who mistrust developers.

You can have great, groundbreaking games but don't expect anyone to be able to predict cost or timeline with any degree of precision. Risk, unpredictability and profitability go hand-in-hand. This isn't rocket science.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: That's easy for you to say. You don't have a trumped-up business degree and haven't spent the majority of your career brown-nosing your way up a greasy ladder of incompetence to the point where you can make decisions that make you feel important rather than reveal you as totally out of your depth in an industry for which you have no respect. That's what qualifies publishers. Now get to work.

VERDICT OUT

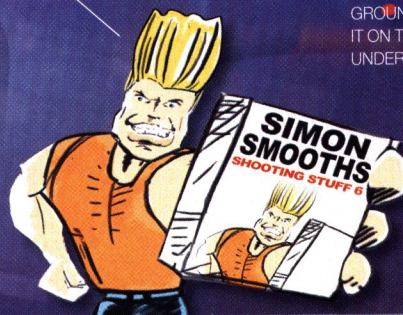
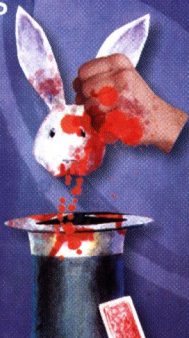
"There are far too many chin-gloves in this business for my liking"

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

"THINKING ABOUT GAME DESIGN WILL DESTROY 'THE MAGIC'"

INDIVIDUALS AS BRAND NAMES
(OR 'AUTHORSHIP IN GAMING')

"I WANT IT GREAT, I WANT IT GROUNDBREAKING, I WANT IT ON TIME AND I WANT IT UNDER BUDGET."



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GUEST #3

▲ JON HARE

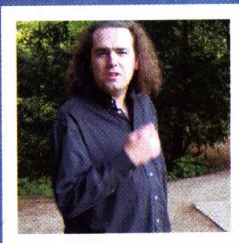
AGE 36

COMPANY Freelance

POSITION Game designer

WORKING ON *Mike Tyson's Heavyweight Boxing*FAVOURITE PC GAME *Heroes Of Might & Magic* series.

SO WHAT'S IMPORTANT ABOUT HIM? Play the *Sensible Soccer* series. If there's one fella who knows about purity of gameplay, it's Mr Hare. That's why top UK developer Codemasters has been hiring him to work on their games for the past three years.



"Now, our own morality, sense of humour and ethics as British people can't be put into our own games"

JON HARE
FREELANCE GAME DESIGNER

THE NOMINATIONS

PANDERING TO THE MINORITY

What depresses me as a designer is you are constantly catering for a minority of PC owners. For example, if 80 per cent of your customers have a certain spec of graphic cards, sound cards or memory etc, what's the point of catering for the 20 per cent who have the latest gear?

With any other business, you wouldn't be pandering to those 20 per cent of people with the kick-ass gear. Unfortunately though, the people who review the games are the ones who have the really fantastic networked machines – so we create games for magazines because they are important. After all, they help shape the public perception of a game.

My policy would be to ignore the minority and sell to the masses, which would give you more penetration into the market. The computer industry is stuck though because it raves about new technology but the new technology is always in the minority.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: Fair enough, and people owning shit PCs is definitely one of the contributing factors for graphically simplistic games such as *The Sims* and *Championship Manager* staying in the charts for so long. But if nobody pushed the so-called technological envelope, where would the breakthrough games come from? In your world, we'd still be sitting round playing *Sensible Soccer*. Wait a minute...

VERDICT IN

THOSE DAMN YANKS!

What hacks me off is the fact that 15 years ago, British developers led the field. We were the top innovators in gaming. We tended to make the games we wanted no matter what the market. What has happened though over the years is that others have taken over the market.

So now, our own morality, sense of humour and ethics as British people can't be put into our own games. Because of market forces, we have taken on American morality at the expense of our own, ie excessive violence is totally acceptable but anything that is blasphemous, sexual, to do with drugs or offensive is out. But those things are a part of British humour and culture.

The trouble is that the mass market is mainly perceived to be America. We have totally sold out.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: God bless America, a country where more people own guns than passports, and where irony describes a metallic appearance. They can be forgiven everything though, as they have given us *The Simpsons* and *The Sopranos*. And you're just bitter because *Sex & Drugs & Rock 'N' Roll* – your ham-fisted attempt at an adult adventure game – was universally rejected by every publisher in existence, British or otherwise.

VERDICT OUT

INTELLECTUAL COPYRIGHT?
THERE'S NOTHING INTELLECTUAL ABOUT IT...

It's the legal side of software – the fact we used to have the freedom to put what we wanted in games. People didn't try to tell us that you couldn't do something because it might just violate someone else's copyright. There was more common sense applied back then.

Now, because of all the franchising and licensing deals (particularly with a sports title), it's just not viable for a small developer to undertake a game without a lot of legal protection. Also, let's say you merely have a simple list of all the famous actors in the world featured in your game – you'd still get your wrists slapped most likely. But, let's say, a newspaper shows Oscar winners in their pages, they aren't going to be touched legally.

The bottom line is the legal system doesn't treat us as the medium that we really are and it fails to recognise what we are capable of doing. We seem to get very unfair treatment.

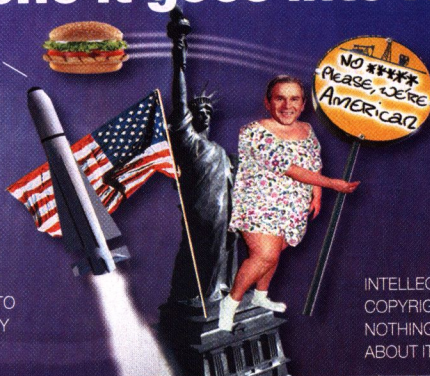
THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: There does seem to be some discrepancy regarding what you can and can't put in games, as often demonstrated by the absurd misspelling of footballers' names. Nobody wants to play as Ryan Goggs or Alan Shoarrer, and for that reason alone it has to go into Room 101.

VERDICT IN

"Nobody wants to play as Ryan Goggs or Alan Shoarrer, and for that reason alone it goes into Room 101"

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

THOSE DAMN YANKS!

PANDERING TO
THE MINORITYINTELLECTUAL
COPYRIGHT? THERE'S
NOTHING INTELLECTUAL
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GUEST #4

▲ DAVID BRABEN

AGE 38

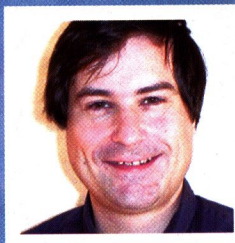
COMPANY Frontier Developments

POSITION Managing director

WORKING ON Three games including the eagerly anticipated *Elite 4*FAVOURITE PC GAME? "Nothing on the PC has caught my imagination recently," reckons Braben. He says *Populous* was the last game he really enjoyed "without quibble" and he

admits he rather enjoys Peter Molyneux's games.

SO WHAT'S IMPORTANT ABOUT

HIM? One word that conjures up nostalgic images for most old-aged gamers – *Elite*. Co-written with Ian Bell, Braben created one of the world's first 3D games on his home computer, and it went on to become a legend ...

"It's unrealistic to define specs properly on the side of a box"

DAVID BRABEN
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS

THE NOMINATIONS

GRAPHICS CARDS THAT DON'T DO WHAT THEY CLAIM

This is becoming less of an issue with GeForce 3 etc, but I'm sick of the sort of driver problems where shadows or other effects don't appear for no apparent reason. Simple changes to the code can make one card work, but then another one stops working – and ultimately it's us developers that get the blame if something doesn't work.

However, the real reason the problem exists is largely down to the way DirectX reports card capabilities – Microsoft initially put little thought into specifying how this was done. Admittedly, things are much better than they were, but is there an ultimate solution to this problem? Erm, you won't like the answer – get a console. I said you wouldn't like it.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: Somewhat ironic that your gripe should be with 3D cards when your sole contribution to the games industry was a wireframe extravaganza played on a computer primarily owned by kids whose parents didn't let them watch television, and who insisted on keeping the plastic sheeting on the back seat of their Austin Allegro. Other than that, it's one of the most boring answers I've ever heard. You're "sick of driver problems"! Christ on a sledge, there are people dying in the world.

VERDICT OUT

PCS THAT CLAIM TO BE FAST BUT AREN'T

It's especially true with laptops but the difference between different '1GHz' PCs is incredible. It makes setting minimum reference specs almost impossible. Some manufacturers use cheaper components that don't live up to the speed of a similar clock-rate, well-specced machine. Quite often, they simply don't have the right drivers for their specific motherboards, or are not properly set up, so they run very slowly.

It is also a problem for the publisher. If they put an artificially high minimum spec on the game's box, shops won't stock it – assuming it will be even worse than the advertised min-spec – so it's a vicious circle.

At the end of the day, there are a plethora of reasons a machine can go slowly. So it's unrealistic to define specs properly on the side of a box – it's a nightmare! That's why this is a pet hate.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: Oh come on, it's hardly the stuff of Orwellian despair, is it? So defining specs is "a nightmare"? Well, why hasn't ITV commissioned a series called *PC Game Specs From Hell*, replete with close-ups of sobbing consumers hunched over a chugging game while wailing inconsolably about frame rates. Hang on, is this why my £200 1.8GHz PC runs like a dog? I stand corrected.

VERDICT IN

OLD IDEAS PUT FORWARD BY DEVELOPERS AS SOMETHING NEW AND RADICAL

Naming no names, many of us will have seen recent claims of "infinite polygon engines" and so on. The trouble is such claims are often made about a graphical technique that is not really new and, in any case, doesn't really affect the game! It's just hype and no big deal technically speaking. What such claims can do though is damage the industry in the eyes of the consumer – it leaves readers cold and such claims can detract from the main point of games – which is to have fun!

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: "Naming no names"? What is this? Watergate? I'm not entirely sure what your point is, but I'm not going to let it into Room 101 purely on the basis of unnecessary and inappropriate use of exclamation marks, which goes in instead.

VERDICT OUT

"You're 'sick of driver problems'!? Christ on a sledge, there are people dying in the world"

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

GRAPHICS CARDS THAT DON'T DO WHAT THEY CLAIM



PCS THAT CLAIM TO BE FAST BUT AREN'T



OLD IDEAS PUT FORWARD BY DEVELOPERS AS SOMETHING NEW AND RADICAL



SPECIAL GUESTS

▲ THE PC ZONE TEAM

AGE 23-32

COMPANY Dennis Publishing

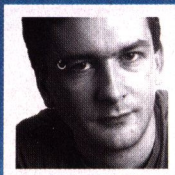
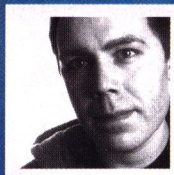
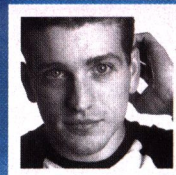
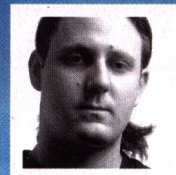
POSITION World's greatest PC games mag.

No, really...

WORKING ON Hitting deadlines

FAVOURITE PC GAME Don't get us started...

SO WHAT'S IMPORTANT ABOUT US? Well, we're all dedicated gamers and we've been in the business for a fair few years. And you keep buying the mag. So we must be doing something right.

DAVE WOODS
EDITORRICHIE SHOEMAKER
DEPUTY EDITORANTHONY HOLDEN
NEWS EDITORMARTIN KORDA
REVIEWS EDITORRHIANNA PRATCHETT
SECTION EDITOR

THE NOMINATIONS

CLICHÉS AND STEREOTYPES

Let's be honest now. The world in general is a fairly bland and uninspired place, full of clichés and lazy stereotypes, but we'd have to say that the games industry is one of the worst offenders. If we see one more dull fantasy epic featuring wise old, bearded magicians and stupid, grinning trolls, or one more tactical squad-based first-person shooter with real-world weapons and bombs to defuse, we'll... we'll... probably do what we always do and just shrug resignedly.

But don't even get us started on puzzles in games: "Ooh, I'm stuck in a level, but here's a cable car/power generator/warp drive that isn't working. Maybe if I replace the battery/fuse/dilithium crystals with the ones I picked up previously and flick the large red switch in this obscure adjoining room, it will start working."

"Hello, Dr Kevorkian? Booking for one, thanks."

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: I couldn't agree more as regards wizards and beards. If PC gaming was a musical genre, it would be prog-rock. And nobody wants that.

VERDICT IN

BAD LANGUAGE...

No, we're not talking about swearing in games, which is fine by us as long as it's used to good effect – there's much more serious offences going on in this business. Perhaps it's some kind of hangover from the days when games were almost purely visual, but there seems to be a nasty misconception that when it comes to games, words don't really matter that much.

Badly translated in-game text, indecipherable manuals, atrocious voice acting – it's like some sort of unwritten (or at least completely misspelled) rule. But the abuse of language doesn't stop there: how about game names with silly spellings and no spaces (*WipEout*, *WarCommander*) or stupidly long game names like *Arcanum: Of Steamworks And Magick Obscura* and *The Settlers IV: The Trojans And The Elixir Of Power?* And while we're at it, let's not forget about I337 hax0r sp33k, which, though not strictly confined to gaming, is clearly very wrong.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: You what? *The Trojans And The Elixir Of Power?* Why not just be done with it and call it 'Tales From Topographic Oceans' and put a picture of a camel inside a rainbow on the box.

VERDICT IN

PATCHES

How would you like it if we released *PC ZONE* unfinished every month, with a couple of pages missing, a few paragraphs mixed up, and a tendency for the binding to unravel if you handled it the wrong way? Don't worry though, we'd make the missing pages available a few months later, and even send you some glue to hold the spine together.

Of course, there's a huge advantage in being able to continually improve and evolve a game, and the infinite number of possible PC specs and configs does make it difficult to get everything right the first time. But we all know that the patch system is being thoroughly exploited.

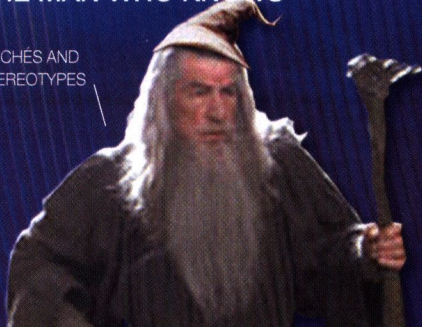
As usual, it's the fault of unscrupulous, shortsighted money men clutching budget spreadsheets, and as usual we poor game-playing schmucks get shafted. We're not asking for the abolition of patching, just the attitude that says it's OK to release a playable beta because you can always fix it later.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: Treating the general public as paying testers is clearly a piss-take. But if it wasn't for patches, how would you fill your cover discs? Considering you run the 'World's Greatest PC Games Mag' you lot haven't got a clue have you?

VERDICT OUT

"If PC gaming was a musical genre it would be prog-rock. And nobody wants that"

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

CLICHÉS AND
STEREOTYPES

BAD LANGUAGE...



PATCHES



"How would you like it if we released PC ZONE unfinished every month?"

PC ZONE TEAM
CREAM OF VIDEOGAME JOURNALISM

FRENCH GAMES

We have nothing against the French as a rule, but there's no getting away from the fact that their games are a bit funny. Is it the derivative gameplay, the unnecessarily convoluted plotlines, the dire scripting? Or is it just the utter French-ness of French games, that certain fruity ambience that screams 'weird French game' as soon as the first misshapen character rears its head.

Their favourite genre is, of course, the point 'n' click adventure, with a back-catalogue that reads like a geography of miserable gaming destinations: *China*, *Pompeii*, *Atlantis*, *Syberia* – all virtually identical in structure, all equally painful in practice.

Their efforts in other genres have generally proved just as eccentric, though of course there are exceptions. Gems such as *Alone In The Dark*, *Fade To Black*, *Cruise For A Corpse* and *Future Wars* all prove there is (was?) more to the French scene than sedative adventuring.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: They do like a parallel universe, and if you ever visit a French development house, you'll feel like you're stepping into one where soap has yet to be invented. Their films are generally as unfathomable as their games, although they're often rescued by being little more than thinly disguised excuses for random sexual encounters. If they can get that into a game, I might be more interested.

VERDICT IN

FRENCH
GAMES

BRING OUT THE HATE!

▲ YOU'VE READ THE INDUSTRY'S RANTINGS NOW – BUT WHAT DO YOU LOATHE ABOUT THE PC GAMING WORLD? WE ASKED YOU TO NAME YOUR ROOM 101 NOMINATIONS ON THE PC ZONE FORUM, AND HERE'S WHAT YOU CAME UP WITH...

READER #1 HR_GIGER

THE NOMINATIONS

1. The unjustified blame that is put onto the games industry every time someone young carries out an act of violence.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS:

Absolutely. The amount of ill-informed comment that is printed whenever a dysfunctional cretin picks up a gun is as depressing as it is predictable. Believe it or not, people were killed before the invention of games.

VERDICT IN

2. The rivalry between formats. Can't we all learn by Sega's example and be a multiformat world?

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: The loyalty people show for a lump of plastic is pathetic. At the end of the day it's just flashing lights and colours on a screen. Or is that in my head?

VERDICT IN

3. Movie tie-ins. Nine times out of ten they suck. I don't understand this as the developer starts with the story, characters and style already created, they just have to put a game together based upon this. What could be easier?

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: I can't let it in because there's a bigger crime to consider, that of games being made into films, such as the insipid drivel that was *Tomb Raider: The Movie*.

VERDICT OUT

READER #2 THE_TRUE_DAKIE

THE NOMINATIONS

1. FIFA's yearly (at least) updates.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: But if simpletons are going to buy them, who can blame EA for relieving them of their cash? That said, *Road To The World Cup* was tantamount to burglary.

VERDICT IN

2. Flight-sim proliferation. If they all model an F/A-18 perfectly, what's the difference?

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: If I had my way flight sims wouldn't be covered in a games magazine. They're virtually multimedia, and nobody wants that.

VERDICT IN

3. Publishers. Maybe this is unrealistic but if high-bandwidth connections become the norm then maybe we could download our games directly from the developers? Then hopefully we would get games uncontaminated by the commercial concerns of publishers who seem to force-feed us mainstream populist horseshit.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: And how are a bunch of hairy-arsed programmers going to work out a business plan? Most of them haven't even worked out how to use a razor.

VERDICT OUT

READER #3 BUNNGOD

THE NOMINATIONS:

Game sequels and the masters of them, Eidos and EA. Eidos releases countless sequels to Lara Croft



games and each one is worse than the last one. Oh yes, and the *Championship Manager* series – I've played it and enjoyed, but all these yearly releases? I still play the first version on my Amiga, and that's good enough for me. As for EA, it's FIFA this, FIFA that, and don't get me started on *The Sims*!

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

SAYS: As I said earlier, if the mindless proles continue to hand over their money for them, publishers are going to fill the shelves with the same game, different year. EA would probably make FIFA a monthly series if

they could get away with it. And people clearly enjoy the continuing adventures of Lara, otherwise they wouldn't carry on buying them.

As for *Champ Man*, if Microsoft can release new versions of Excel every year, why can't Eidos?

VERDICT OUT

READER #4 PEACHFUZZ

THE NOMINATIONS

1. Big boxes. So much for everyone switching to nice little DVD-style cases. Some games are still being released in huge lumps of ex-tree.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: Are they? I wouldn't know, the last game I bought was on tape.

VERDICT OUT

2. Video card manufacturers: I don't care if it's all singing all dancing. It's going to be two years before any of those new-fangled instructions will be seen, so stick your £400 up your arse. I want it cost effective and I want it now.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: It does seem a bit of a piss-take that for the price of a video card you could buy two next generation consoles.

VERDICT IN

"It's going to be two years before those new-fangled instructions will be seen so stick your £400 up your arse"

PEACHFUZZ
PC ZONE READER

3. Sheep. I know that's nothing to do with games but I'm allergic to wool, I don't like lamb and the Welsh would become celibate overnight.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS SAYS: But without the release of regularly emptying their back wheels into a compliant ewe, the angry Welsh might rise up against their English oppressors. If they could get out of the pub.

VERDICT OUT



For your eyes only

JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

The most famous secret agent in the world arrives on the PC. Mark Hill is shaken and stirred

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Gearbox

PUBLISHER EA

WEBSITE www.gearboxsoftware.com

OUT End of year

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- James Bond finally makes it on the PC
- Developed by creators of *Half-Life: Opposing Force* and *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*
- Loads of gadgets
- Mixture of spectacular action and pure stealth

ILLUSTRATION Joe Roberts

CV



GEARBOX SOFTWARE

This team hasn't released any full games of their own yet, but if you're going to make expansion packs, they might as well be for one of the best games ever

1999 Not only was its add-on pack *Opposing Force* every bit as good as the original *Half-Life*, some of the set pieces were even better.

2001 *Blue Shift* is their second *Half-Life* add-on and you can tell it's designed as console extra. They also ported the whole of *Half-Life* to the PS2.

2002 An excellent conversion of *Tony Hawk's 3* will be followed by *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* and *NightFire*.

WHEN YOU'RE A kid you want to be Luke Skywalker. When you grow up you want to be James Bond. And it's easy to see why. Despite being forever associated with cold turkey, cheap tinsel and crap cracker jokes as the entire series is shown every damn Christmas, Bond is what every man wants to be: cool, well-dressed, a successful gambler, an action hero and a magnet for beautiful women. OK, so Luke may be a Jedi, but the only available female around him turns out to be his sister, while Bond need only breathe to seduce legions of Playboy centrefolds. He might not have a lightsabre, but that's about the only gadget he doesn't get to play with.

But, perhaps because it's such a massive licence, the least secret agent in the world has been absent from our PC monitors, preferring instead shallow but

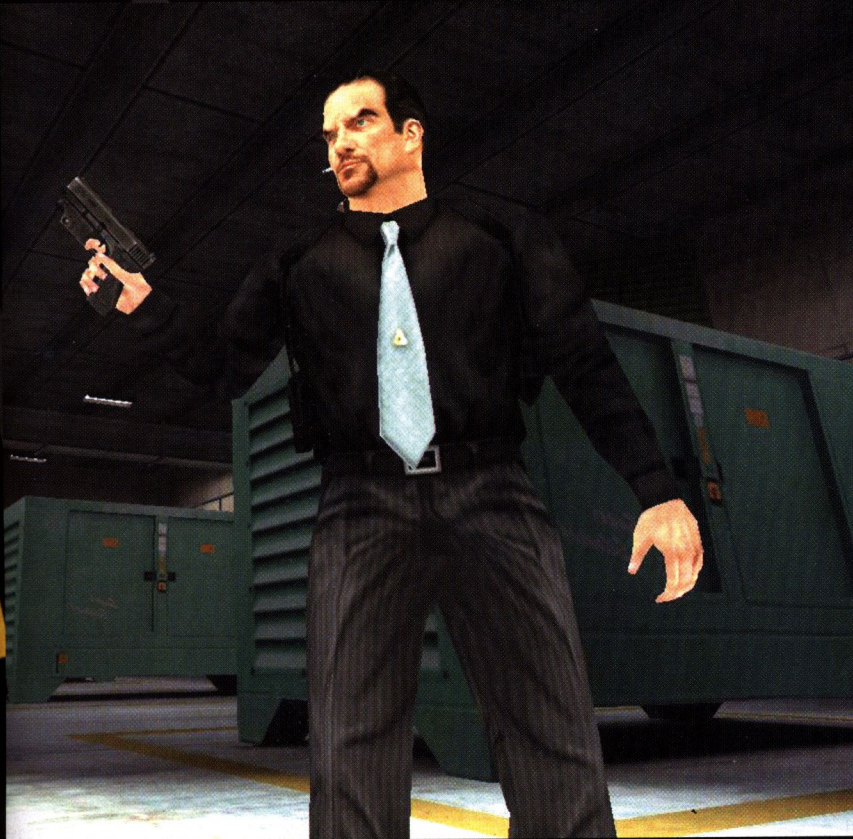
lush and profitable console outings. In fact, five years ago, *GoldenEye* was the toast of the console industry, wowing everyone on the N64 with FPS action that by rights should have been on the PC too.

Still, it's no use complaining about the past, especially now that we have *NightFire* to look forward to. And look forward to it you should, because it's being developed by none other than Gearbox, the makers of the wonderful *Opposing Force* add-on for *Half-Life* and the upcoming mouth-watering prospect that is *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*. What's more, close links with Valve Software mean that the pedigree behind the title is second-to-none.

THE NAME IS LIFE, HALF-LIFE

We spoke to EA producer Michael Condrey and Gearbox Director of

"With all of the sets, special effects and specialised equipment this game has, a movie version would cost a billion dollars"



Beppe di Marco: Bond's baddest supervillain.

Development Landon Montgomery to squeeze out every bit of info we possibly could. And being *Half-Life* freaks we couldn't help asking just how much like it *NightFire* will be. "This *Bond* game is a first-person action adventure," says Landon. "And as such, Bond will have to think and shoot – just as Gordon did. But, James Bond has a lot more resources at his disposal and as a result, the gadgetry in *NightFire* is unprecedented. Also, in classic 007 narrative style, Bond will go all over the world to exotic locales (and meet exotic women in exotic situations). I like to think of this game as the ultimate Bond

story that could never be made into a movie. With all of the sets, special effects and specialised equipment this game has, a movie version would cost a billion dollars to produce."

That doesn't hide the fact that this will be Gearbox's first full game from scratch, but Landon isn't worried. "We've worked on quite a few FPS titles so we definitely have the experience to deliver a quality game. As individuals, we're accustomed to building games from scratch. And certainly, as a company, we're very accustomed to working with established properties – such as *Half-Life*, *Tony*

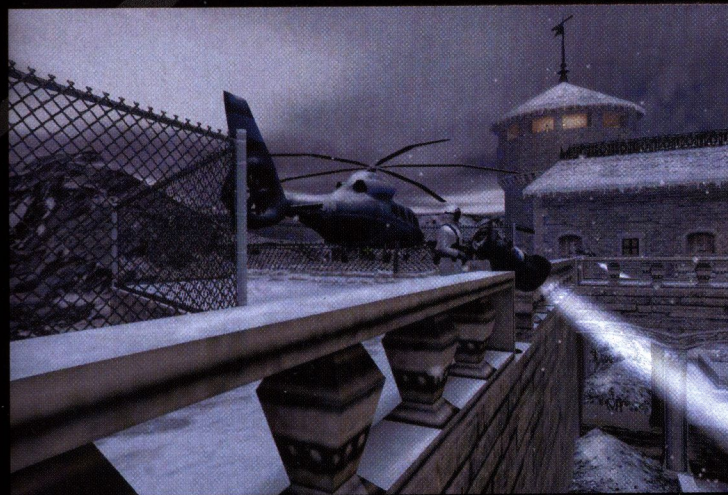
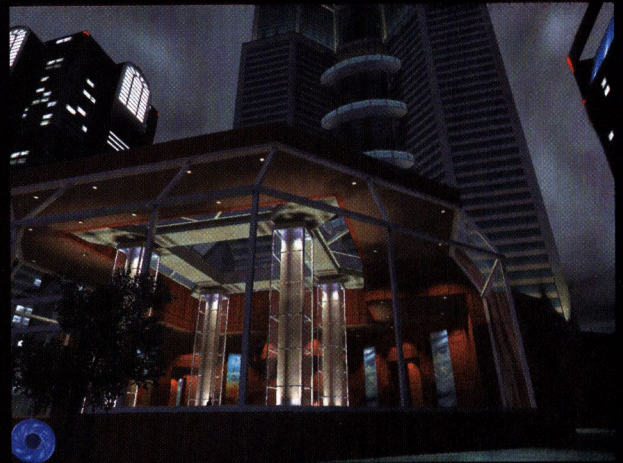
Hawk's Pro Skater and now James Bond.

Our combined experience, technical expertise and passion for the subject matter made the *NightFire* project a nice fit for us."

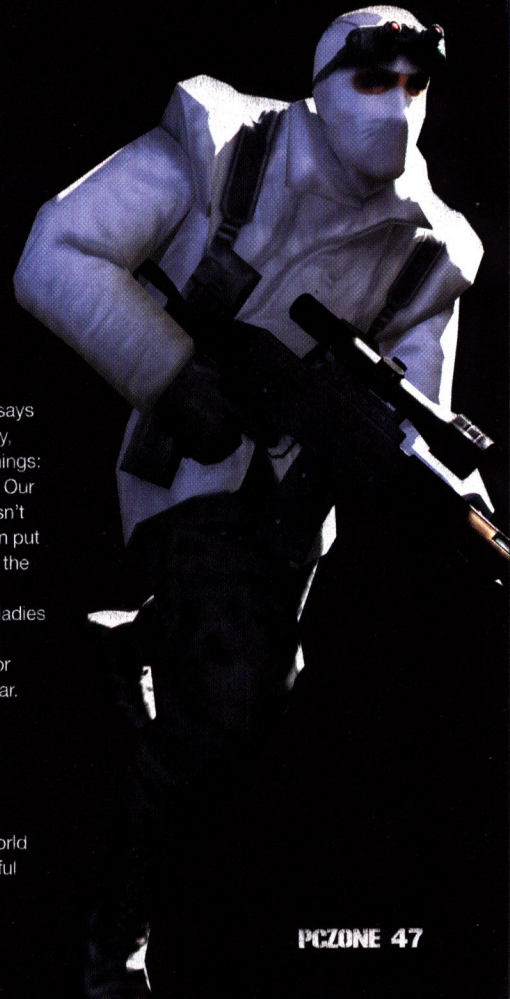
This is James Bond for the new millennium, so don't expect to play a 1960s hairy-chested chauvinist who likes to slap his women about. Although Michael Condrey assures us they're aiming to capture the essence of Bond, no one wants to play a pig-headed harasser. Instead, *NightFire* will concentrate on the cool and smooth action hero. "I believe Bond is probably the most recognised superhero in the world," says Michael. "With 40 years of rich history, Bond encompasses a multitude of things: he's suave, sophisticated and smart. Our Bond will deliver just that". That doesn't mean 007's amorous nature has been put aside, though. As well as the stealth, the shooting, the puzzle-solving and the gadgets, you'll still have to keep the ladies happy. How this will be incorporated into the gameplay (dirty cut-scenes or save-the-girl missions) isn't quite clear. But we're definitely in a full-blown Bond adventure here.

SPY HARD

It's not too hard to cook up the main ingredients of a James Bond plot (world domination, exotic scenery, a beautiful



Stealth is important in some missions in others you can be as noisy as you like.



evil woman, a beautiful good woman and so on) but it's how it all comes together to create a thrilling visual spectacle that matters. And *NightFire* is shaping up very nicely indeed. Rather than taking some of the scenes and locations from an upcoming film – as so many lazy adaptations have done before – Gearbox is working on a totally original story, with plenty of intrigue and locations all over the world. "You'll see some key inspirations from the long list of exciting missions James Bond has been through on the silver screen," says Michael. "And staying true to *Bond* form, there will be a main enemy – evil mastermind Alexander Drake – who Bond must defeat in order to save the world... and get the girl."

What? You want more details? Well Michael's got plenty of 'em. "You will

Q&A



Associate producer Michael Condrey and Gearbox director of development Landon Montgomery tell us all about their fave 007 stuff.

PCZ Who is your favourite James Bond actor?

MC Each of the actors delivered the James Bond character in an exciting and unique way. Honestly, it's too hard for me to choose a favourite.

LM I have to say that Pierce Brosnan is just excellent in the role. I always felt he was Bond before he was actually Bond. As a result, I've really enjoyed the more recent films and am really looking forward to the next one.

PCZ Favourite film?

MC Again, each was exciting and unique, in its own way. If I had to choose, and mind you it would be very difficult, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* would probably be close to the top.

LM *GoldenEye*.

PCZ Favourite villain?

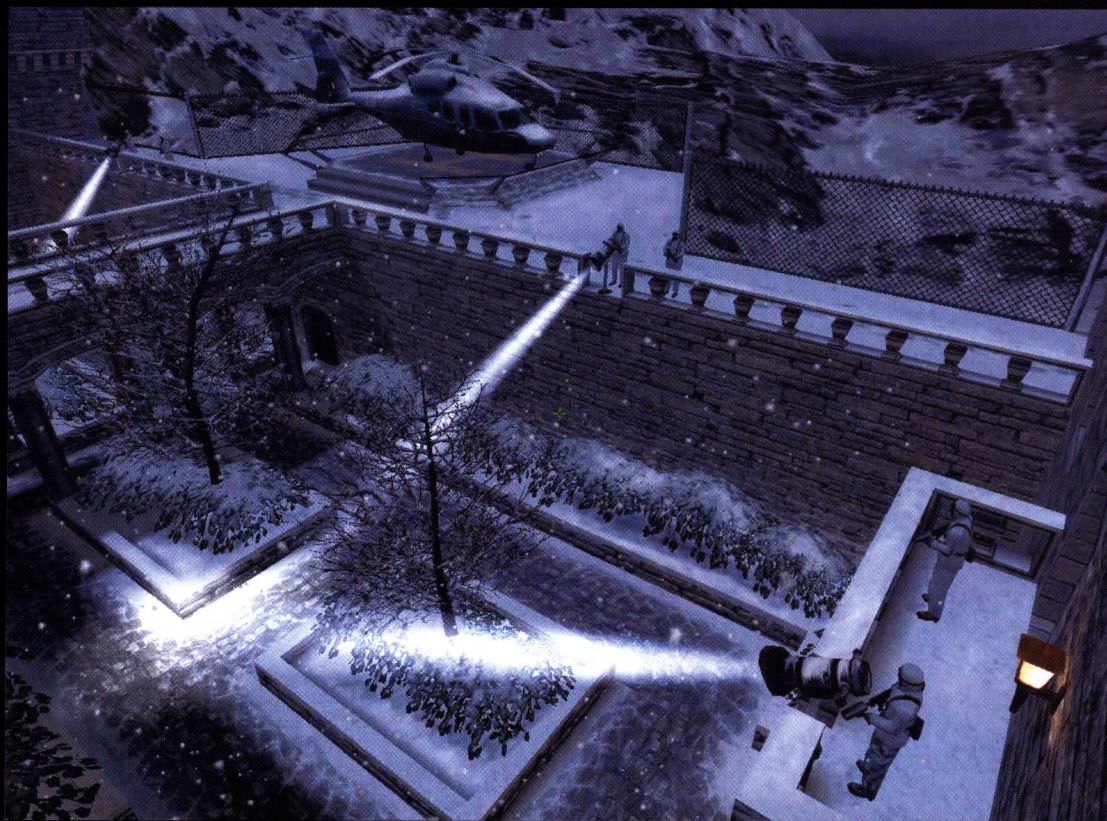
MC Favourite villain... hmm that's tough as well. There are a number of great candidates, Goldfinger, Jaws, Oddjob, Rook, plus all of the beautiful villains, Electra King, May Day, Zena. Let me just say that you'll be able to play as my favourite villain in the multiplayer experience.

LM Christopher Walken as Max Zorin in *A View To A Kill*. I guess I'm just a huge fan of his.

PCZ Favourite gadget?

MC With more than 30 weapons and gadgets in the game to choose from, it's difficult to narrow that number down to only five. To be honest though, I'm really enjoying using the X-ray vision mode of the Q-specs ... if you know what I mean.

LM There are quite a few I'm fond of. I tend to like the classic spy stuff. But there are so many cool gadgets that we're putting in the game it's too difficult to choose just one.



Locations include an alpine Austrian castle, a south pacific desert isle, a Japanese estate and a high altitude zero-gravity space station.

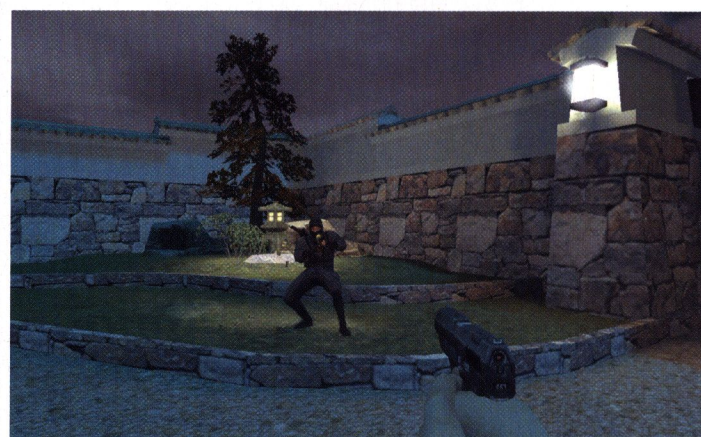


manoeuvre through a snow covered Austrian castle, infiltrate a Tokyo high rise, blast your way through a fortified jungle base, penetrate a hidden South Pacific island training facility, go through a zero-gravity space station, and more, all in attempts to save the world from the nuclear arsenal of the most diabolical *Bond* villain yet." Well, the films have always been about a rollercoaster-ride, and *NightFire* is no different. And it's

good to see that stealth is playing a big part in the game too – peeking round corners, slipping past guards and using gadgets every step of the way is encouraged as is the gung-ho approach.

But *NightFire* offers enough freedom to ensure you can complete missions either way. At least to a certain point. "Right from the start of the game, you see that the missions are far from linear,"

OUR NAMES ARE BOND, JAMES BOND



NIGHTFIRE'S MULTIPLAYER ACTION LOOKS EVERY BIT AS HOT AS THE SINGLE PLAYER GAME

It wouldn't be a proper PC shooter if it wasn't going to do the business online, and *NightFire*'s multiplayer is being taken very seriously indeed. You'll find all the usual modes, such as Elimination, Capture the Briefcase and King of the Hill, plus fully customisable weapons and "an innovative system of modifiers and base modes for hundreds of different multiplayer experiences", whatever the hell that means.

We're hoping multiplayer games will feature as much stealth and gadget-use as the single-player game, and not become just a standard slaughterhouse that just happens to feature the skins of many familiar characters. The only problem, of course, is that everyone will want to be Pussy Galore. Well, I know I will.

says Michael. "Instead, we encourage and reward players for their ingenuity. Take the stealth route, find the hidden passage, utilise a new gadget, run and gun straight through... Players will have the freedom and opportunity to customise their paths in many different and unique ways throughout *NightFire*. To maximise their score, they will need to find the best balance of all their Bond skills."

GOLDEN EYES

This being an FPS the question inevitably arises about the graphics and visual feel of the game. While nearly every big game scheduled for the next two years is using the new *Unreal* technology, thereby guaranteeing seemingly endless permutations of amazing graphics, *NightFire* makes a bold move by using an all-new engine developed especially for this title. "We have licensed technology created by id Software and by Valve Software that we're using for tools, data formats, entities and more," says Landon, "but the core rendering engine was written at Gearbox and is several steps ahead of what you've seen from us in the past. The game will take full advantage of the latest hardware from the leading vendors". You can judge for yourself



You can only drive cars in the console versions, but in a pretty fair exchange the PC gets a top-class proper shooter to rival the likes of *Medal Of Honor*.

from the screenshots what the general look of it will be, but Michael adds that the levels themselves are going to be pretty impressive. "Think amazing heights and depths. That's the direction for *NightFire*." So, from the sound of it, anyone who was afraid of the heights in *Jedi Knight II* (like me, for example) will be carrying their

hearts in their mouths during most of these levels.

"The levels are larger than any previous *Bond* games," adds Michael, "and the non-linear pathways increase the replayability that much more. But really, it's not the size of the levels, but the depth and breadth of the gameplay you can experience, that really matters, right?" By way of example, he then goes on to talk us through a part of one of the missions, just so we can get a taste of what the action will be like.

"You halo dive down to an outer gatehouse on the rocky approach road. The Austrian castle looms above you. You must make your way past the perimeter guards and penetrate the

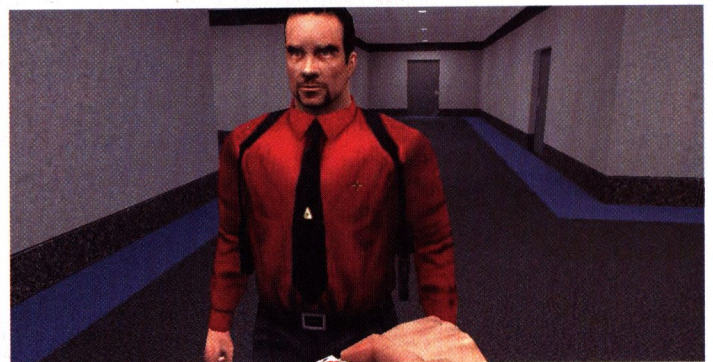
outer walls, then through a series of courtyards inside the keep to get into the living quarters. Drake is hosting a formal party inside and guests and security are present throughout. Your main goal of the level is to infiltrate the castle, blend in with the party guests, retrieve a stolen data chip, rescue Zoe and escape. You have to overpower the guards transporting the chip, assist Zoe, and then escape in the castle gondola. But your escape is cut short when... well, you'll have to wait and see."

If it plays like it sounds, we're in for a riot. Another visual element has been borrowed from that great stealth shooter *Project IGI*. "The game is primarily a first-person POV title," says Michael, "but



There are plenty of gadgets, and we can very easily think of one or two uses for the X-ray specs.

INSPECTOR GADGET



SO WHAT COOL TOYS CAN WE PLAY WITH?

No One Lives Forever might have tried to do an 007 with their use of gadgets, but *NightFire* will leave it well behind. With MI6's Q-lab providing all sorts of new toys, you'll never have a dull moment in the whole game. There will even be briefings from the Q boys about how each one works, though we doubt John Cleese will be available to clown around.

Among the gadgets you'll get to play with are a multipurpose wrist watch, a pair of Q-Vision enhancement glasses (X-ray, Light Amplification, Infra-red), a lighter concealed Q-camera, a PDA data-hacker, a cartridge fired pen dart and a car key that conceals a stun gun. "Nothing is more satisfying than using the Q-lab watch stunner to temporarily disable an enemy, and then finishing him off with a classic Bond right cross to the jaw," enthuses Michael, although he later admits the X-ray glasses are even more satisfying when there are women around.

And, of course, you'll have a full arsenal of weapons too, including sniper rifles, full automatic assault rifles, high damage rocket and grenade launchers, specially disguised ambush weapons such as the Sentry Suitcase Turret and remote activated Q-bombs. If nothing else, it makes a refreshing change from all that "very realistic weapons" rubbish we get every other day.



Do the Shake 'N' Vac.

The game will switch to a third-person view for certain actions, much like in *Project IGI*.

we've also introduced a new dynamic third-person camera system for playing interactive game mechanics that are best experienced in third-person and for highlighting key dramatic moments, like when Bond is climbing a wall. The game is still in development, which allows us to play around with the cameras to find the right balance of both."

It certainly sounds like Gearbox is leaving nothing out. But what about

possibly the most important thing in a first-person shooter?

AI SPY

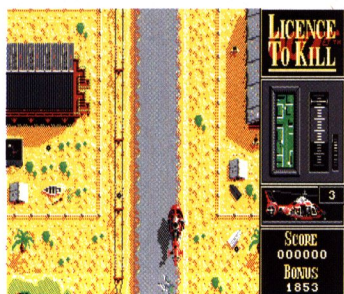
As far as I'm concerned, *Half-Life* still offers the best example of enemy AI in any game, especially the soldiers and the black ops. This is even truer in *Opposing Force*, Gearbox's expansion pack, where the intelligence of your human enemies reaches a peak in computer games. And, rest assured, this is an area that'll shine. "Because of the titles we've worked on and our emphasis on game-play engineering," explains Landon, "Gearbox has become quite good at AI programming over the years. In *NightFire*, you can just take for granted all of the AI behaviours you've seen in games such as *Half-Life*, but they'll be taken much further." That alone is a good enough reason to buy the game as far as I'm concerned.

And don't be put off by the fact that it's also being developed for consoles. Following EA's successful approach to the *Harry Potter* games, each version of *NightFire* will be well suited to its platform. So, while the console releases will feature driving levels designed by the people who do the *Need For Speed* titles, Gearbox is concentrating on delivering a proper PC shooter (they're not really involved in the console versions) and adding the kind of multiplayer PC gamers want.

"Our goal is to create an enjoyable interactive *Bond* experience for the PC fans," assures Michael. "In this game you get the whole package: the girls, the gadgets, the brains, the brawn. *NightFire* has it all."

If that's not enough, just think of all those women falling at your feet. 'Cos games make you sexy, right? [X]

A VIEW TO A PAST



IT WASN'T ALWAYS CONSOLE. TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF 007'S EARLIER OUTINGS

He might be all over Nintendo and Sony's systems with *GoldenEye*, *Agent Under Fire* and so on, but there was a time when James cared a lot less for the "kidz" and a bit more for intelligent and mature computer gamers like us. Well, at least keyboard-owning gamers, since the PC has always been neglected.

Of course, if you go way back you'll see that there were a fair number of average-to-rubbish titles on the old 8-bit computers (Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad) like *A View To A Kill*, *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *The Living Daylights* – the latter two also appearing on the Amiga and Atari ST.

But it didn't really seem like Her Majesty's Secret Service gave a damn about the PC. It's well over a decade since *Operation Stealth* and *Licence To Kill* came out, and neither were memorable landmarks.

Licence To Kill appeared way back in '89 in the form of a not very original scrolling shooter. *Operation Stealth* came out a year later and wasn't even a 007 game until its publishers bought the licence in time for its US release. At least it was a decent adventure in the style of early *Indy* games. Oh, and don't even mention *James Pond*.





"A million bad guys in the world and I gotta kill one with feet smaller than my sister's."



Walk a mile in John McClane's shoes. It's Christmas Eve and you're immersed in the hell of Nakatomi Plaza under siege – just like the original movie. With your wife held hostage and evildoers on the loose, you have 40 floors of explosive action ahead of you, and only an arsenal of weapons – and your wit – to keep you alive. With epic true-to-movie missions, original scenarios and only a small arsenal of weapons, it's going to be a long night, cowboy.

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WELCOME TO THE PARTY, PAL.



There's no party to fall back on in *Neverwinter Nights*, it's just you. But at least you can get some loving action with your henchmen.

The adventure begins...

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

At the promise of big burly Canadian men *Rhianna Pratchett* was first on the plane to see the latest *Neverwinter Nights* code

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bioware
PUBLISHER Infogrames
WEBSITE www.neverwinter.nights.com
OUT Summer 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- A beautifully rendered fully 3D world from the maker's of the superb *Baldur's Gate* series
- More than 60 hours of gameplay
- An extremely powerful tool kit that makes creating mods and maps very easy
- Customisable characters, interface, gameplay and camera angles to suit different styles of play

XP



Dungeons & Dragons is 25 this year; we look at the history of its advanced brother in arms

1972 Dave Arneson and Gary Gygax from Wisconsin create *Dungeons & Dragons* a revolutionary new RPG system whereby each player is their own hero without the need for a board or miniatures.

1978 AD&D, a more structured version of D&D with set rules, is born and continues to grow in popularity throughout the '80s.

1988 The 2nd edition AD&D rules are released along with the first AD&D title *Pools Of Radiance*.

1993 *Dark Sun: Shattered Lands* is released. You controlled a party of escaped gladiators. The RPG of the A-Team.

1998 *Baldur's Gate* makes an appearance, and becomes one of the most popular AD&D games. Bioware establishes itself as a major RPG player.

2000 *Icwind Dale* hits the streets and receives a far bit of criticism as it's seen as somewhat of a fill in during the run up to *Baldur's Gate II*. Unlike *BG* it allowed you to create your entire party at the beginning.

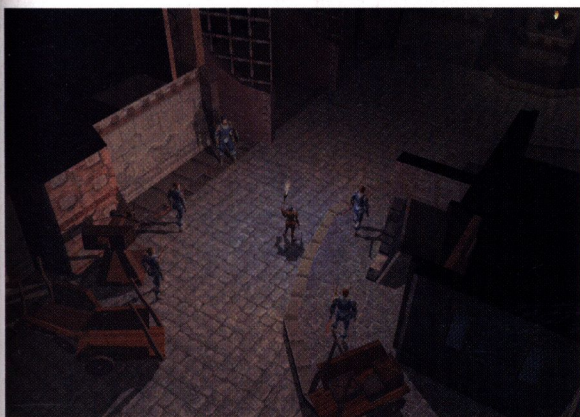
2000 *Baldur's Gate II* the huge follow up to *BG* arrives and it includes new features such as character class kits.

IT SEEMS A long time ago since that first dice was gingerly thrown and the first set of stats scribbled down. When thousands of young men, and a couple of women, ostracised themselves from society in favour of *Advanced Dungeons And Dragons* in dimly lit back rooms. But luckily for us, some of those young men got out of those back rooms and became game developers, otherwise our trip to Canada to see Bioware's latest code for *Neverwinter Nights* might have been just a nosh up at the local grill with a spot of moose watching.

A NIGHT'S TALE

Since our last *Neverwinter Nights* update in issue 105 the gameplay in every area has advanced by leaps and bounds, and Bioware is now in the last few months of testing, retesting and polishing to ensure you get the best possible RPG experience. The focus of the game is quite different to anything Bioware has done before with the *Baldur's Gate* series, and revolves around four key areas: single-player, multiplayer, the dungeon master client and the toolkit. In our last preview we looked mainly at the multiplayer and dungeon master aspects of *Neverwinter Nights*, so now we're going to fill you in on





Facing your enemy with flaming swords. Having fun yet?



Some of the characters take some time off fighting to pose a bit.

the single-player and toolkit features.

As it's the single-player aspect that RPG fans will immediately gravitate towards we'll start there. Unlike the party-based system used in the *Baldur's*

Gate and *Icewind Dale* games, *Neverwinter Nights* focuses around a more *Diablo II*-style single hero, who apart from hiring the occasional henchman or summoning a creature is on their own. The

storyline starts with your hero being summoned to the city of Neverwinter, which has been blighted by a seemingly incurable plague, to join the city's militia to help control the burgeoning unrest and search for a cure. You start in the main keep of Neverwinter, which acts as a training ground as well as introducing you to some of the main characters and plot elements. In conjunction with the 3rd edition AD&D rules that *Neverwinter Nights* is built around you get a choice of seven races and 11 classes, each with their own skills and abilities.

"We're trying to make it possible for anyone to get into it"

RAY MUZYKA
BIOWARE'S JOINT CEO

THE ORIGINAL NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

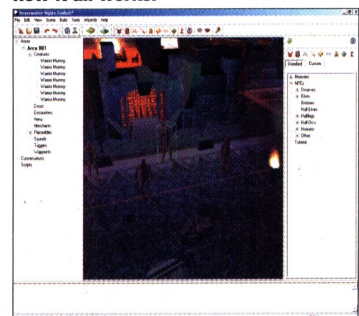


There was in fact life before *Neverwinter Nights* in the form of... *Neverwinter Nights*, one of the first online RPGs that ran through America Online between 1991 and 1997. The game ran on one server that initially only held 200 people at once, which increased to 500 by 1997. Unfortunately the companies who owned the copyrights to *Neverwinter Nights*; developer SSI, D&D publisher TSR and AOL clashed over AOL's desire to make *NWN* a 'pay to play' game and the server was shut down. Who knew then what a different place the world would be with the release of *EverQuest* just two years later?

THINGS TO MAKE AND DO

The whole issue of character creation is one of the areas in which the Bioware team has adapted *Neverwinter Nights*, in order to make it reach out to those gamers that maybe enjoy the RPG genre but have previously stayed away from the more complicated aspects of an AD&D title. "At its core *Neverwinter* is a hardcore RPG," explains senior producer Trent Oster. "But on top of that hardcore role-playing aspect we've put in levels to shield people from some of the complexities." The game has a full character generation system for the first time and recommended buttons through each stage of creation for those

Unlock chapter one and discover how it all works.



Q&A

GREG ZESCHUK



Joint Bioware CEO Greg Zeschuk stops us getting all misty eyed about *Baldur's Gate*.

PCZ How much of a departure do you think *Neverwinter Nights* is from the *Baldur's Gate* series?

GREG Well what we have become known for, the big intensive role-playing experience, is still very much there in the single-player aspect. We've had an entire design department just working the storyline.

PCZ Do you think the fact that it's only about 60 hours of gameplay compared with the 200 in *BGII* will disappoint your hard-core fans.

GREG It's the quality that's important not the quantity. I don't think we're ever going to make another 200-hour game, or we certainly shouldn't!

PCZ So what benefits did you gain from dropping the gameplay hours?

GREG It allowed us to make things much tighter. When you have a smaller area to work with, the opportunity to tweak things, fix things, is greater. We're trying to take a good size story and make it better quality for all.

PCZ So is this the last we've seen of isometric *Baldur's Gate* epics?

GREG All the games we've done in the past are exactly that, in the past. We loved doing them and we had great fun, but we're always looking to the future. *Neverwinter Nights* is going to be bigger than *Baldur's Gate*, it's going to be better than *Baldur's Gate*, because it has got to be.

who are unfamiliar with the different classes and kits. But it's also possible for players to go in as normal and create their own specific character makeup.

Many of the puzzles throughout the storyline can be solved in a simple way but there will be more advanced paths and trickier quests for hardcore players. Aspects like the interface, camera angle and function keys are also very user friendly and customisable for your own specific gaming preferences.

"The way we see it capturing the mainstream is not about this big amorphous mass of people who are all alike," claims joint Bioware CEO Ray Muzyka. "It's a significantly large group of people who all like different things. Some like the behind the shoulders camera, some like the top-down camera, some like action whereas others like more of a storyline. What we're trying to do is make *Neverwinter* appeal to all those different kinds of people through the customisation, through the content and the class system, the camera angles and the interface. We're trying to make it possible for anyone to get into it."

"*Neverwinter Nights* is really a re-examination of computer games,"



With about 60 hours of gameplay *NWN* is shorter than *BG*, but Bioware promises it'll be more satisfying.

continues Trent. "It's a re-examination of rules and interaction. In *Baldur's Gate* you have a party with multiple characters but *Neverwinter* is much more of a return to the pen and paper style in that you have a party of one character. It is more traditional and actually does flow into multiplayer better. You are the character you play!" And it suddenly strikes me how odd it is to see a rather large Canadian man talking with such teenage zeal about the finer aspects of RPG.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Another aspect Bioware has simplified is the toolkit. *Neverwinter Nights* is shipping with more comprehensive and powerful tools than the ones in *BG* and *BGII*.

"I think making your own adventures in a game is an awesome idea," enthuses Trent. "Probably most of our main design decisions have been made with the toolset in mind, in terms of our whole approach to tile-based art work. We've made it very easy to work within the toolset, because the whole idea all

along was it has to be simple to use. We wanted people to be able to quickly create an adventure, which means building an area, dumping some creatures in and getting into the game, in maybe 10-15 minutes."

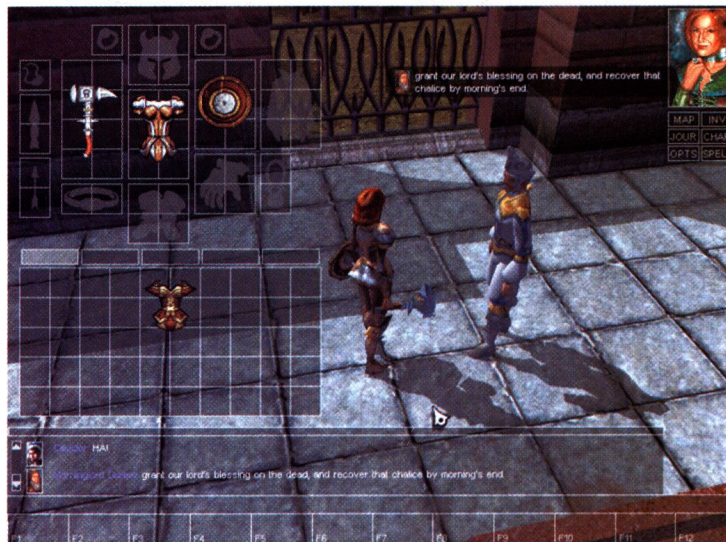
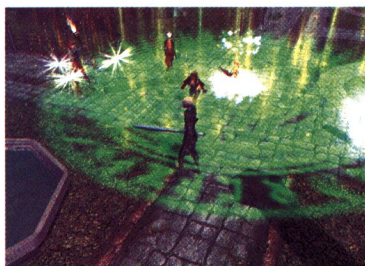
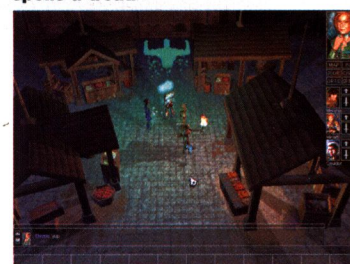
The team are also willing to give up a few of their developer secrets along the way, and when you complete the first chapter it becomes 'unlocked' and you can load it up in the tool set and see how it was created. This can allow you to model your initial adventures and sequences on the ones the team originally used. But partly we suspect, this is because Bioware knows that there are fans out there that like nothing better than a good rummage through their code.

Bioware hopes to create an all-encompassing RPG that both hardcore players and the hack 'n' slash brigade can enjoy. But whether it turns out to be the four course meal we're expecting or a paltry prawn cocktail is something we'll reveal in our upcoming review. But we've played the code and are starving ourselves in anticipation of a full on banquet. **PCZ**

"I don't think we're ever going to make another 200 hour game"

GREG ZESCHUK
BIOWARE'S JOINT CEO

The 3D world shows off the spells a treat.



If you don't want to mess around creating a character *Neverwinter* can generate a couple of characters for you.

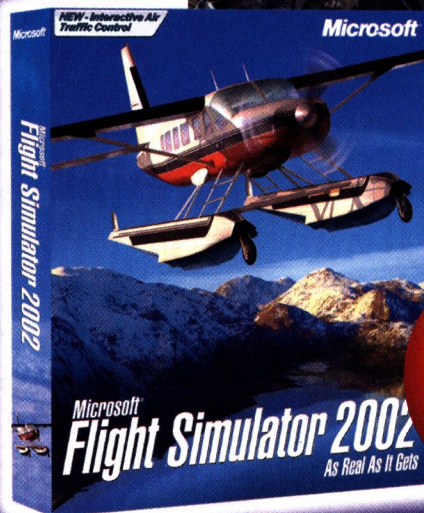
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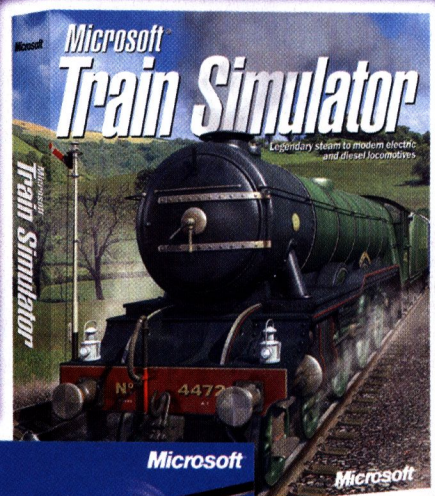


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"You'll never guess who I had in the back..."

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Strangelite
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
WEBSITE www.empireinteractive.com
OUT July 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Conversion of one of the Dreamcast's best games
- By the same people that converted *Virtua Tennis*
- Should look even better than the Dreamcast version
- You get to drive around in a taxi like a nutter

All the fun of the fare CRAZY TAXI

Old Dreamcast games don't die, they get resurrected on the PC. Taxi for Steve Hill...

CV

STRANGELITE

Dreamcast conversions a speciality

2002 We may have quibbled that their recent conversion of *Virtua Tennis* lacked some of the graphical subtlety of the Dreamcast original, but that didn't stop us voting it the winner of the coveted Sports Games Supertest. Praise comes no higher.

SOME DAY A real rain will come and wash all the scum off the streets. Until then, unscrupulous minicab drivers will continue to aggressively hawk their services, proceed to take you home via the Watford gap, and then have the temerity to charge you three times the agreed fare. It may not be the most obvious subject for a game, but *Crazy Taxi* is about as far removed as it's possible to be from the depressing world of pine air freshener, Magic FM, and the stench of other people's sick. In fact it's quite a cheery take on the lot of the cab driver, insanely so, as the name suggests. Peruse the surrounding screenshots, and you will find nothing but bold, bright colours, blue skies and smiling faces.

Not your average PC game then, you might be thinking, and you'd be absolutely right. If you've been living in your PC bunker for the last few years, let's bring you up to speed. A big hit in the arcades, Sega's *Crazy Taxi* was an obvious choice to appear on the Dreamcast, and did so to critical and commercial acclaim (well, as commercial as you can be on a console owned by

about eight people). There was a *Crazy Taxi 2*, but it's the original that we are concerned with here. It's being converted to the PC by the same outfit that brought us *Virtua Tennis*, a game that shares a similar history: from arcade hit to Dreamcast classic to PC footnote in the space of a couple of years.

TWO YEARS TOO LATE?

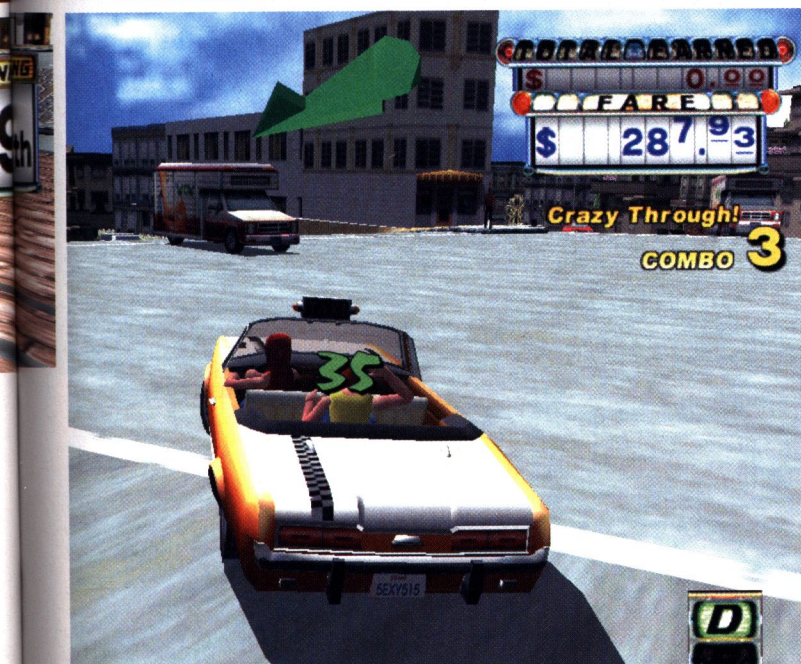
Crazy Taxi may have had the Dreamcast brigade drooling into their bibs back in the day, but why on Earth would a discerning PC gamer want to play a two-year-old console game? Rather than posing aggressive rhetorical questions, let's ask the game's producer, Strangelite's Danny Rawles. So is the notoriously snobbish PC community going to be interested?

"If not, then they should be," he says. "Just because it's a two-year-old game – all that means is that anyone who hasn't played *Crazy Taxi* has been deprived for the past two years. It's an ageless classic that still looks great and plays brilliantly – even in today's market."

We can't argue with that, but is there anything that can be done to improve



"South of the river? Certainly, sir."



Take the fastest route possible to keep the meter running.



"Whores, skunk pussies, buggers, queens, fairies, dopers, junkies, sick, venal."

upon the – admittedly excellent – Dreamcast visuals?

"The Dreamcast version does look great, which is a testament to a technically great console. Our aim is to create a faithful conversion of the DC original and as such, for the majority of players, the game will look identical to the Dreamcast version. But for those with higher specification PCs, they can benefit from higher resolutions and increased draw distances."

THE GAME REMAINS THE SAME

Other than that, it's exactly the same game, and one that sees you take the wheel of that big yellow car in the pictures. Cruising round one of two fictional cities in the titular taxi, the idea is to take passengers to their intended destination in the quickest possible time, something of a breath of fresh air (literally) for anyone who regularly uses cabs in London. A fairly simplistic concept, but there is more to it than that, such as the fact that tips can be earned by driving flamboyantly, or to be more accurate, dangerously. Weaving through an

"Crazy Taxi is one of those rare games that offers instant pick-up and-play gratification"

DANNY RAWLES
PRODUCER

impossible gap will yield a squeal of delight from your passenger, and an extra couple of dollars in your arse pocket.

Yes, if it wasn't already blatantly obvious, the game is of course set in America. As such, crass commercialism is rife, and a number of major brand name outlets provide some of the destinations.

Pizza Hut, The Original Levi's Company, and Tower Records are all featured in the game, along with more generic locations such as the Baseball Stadium or the Cable Car. Although the general direction is hinted at by a great big arrow at the top of the screen, the cabbie's proverbial knowledge will come in handy, and being able to recognise areas and find your way around town will be invaluable. Each city comes replete with a working traffic system, with none of the

ambient drivers in the least bit bothered that you are in a hurry. As well as the two cities, a host of challenges are available, such as bursting balloons and even knocking down bowling pins, another parallel with *Virtua Tennis*.

The emphasis is clearly on 'fun', and *Crazy Taxi* could well prove a welcome departure from the goblin-ridden nonsense that traditionally pervades the PC. The game's producer certainly thinks so: "Absolutely. Not



only are these games fun to play but they are also fun to develop and produce. *Crazy Taxi* is one of those rare games that offers instant pick-up-and-play gratification. The game is insanely fast and fun to play and I strongly believe PC gamers will enjoy the 'adrenaline rush' gameplay that our console cousins have always raved about."

GET IN THE CAR

It may have escaped your notice, but the PC is also privy to another high-profile console conversion of a driving game. *Crazy Taxi* could be in danger of having its thunder stolen by the anarchic monster that is *Grand Theft Auto III*. Danny Rawles hopes not: "I think *GTA III* is a great game and will undoubtedly do well on the PC, but we are competing for a different sector of the market. Both games are great in their own right but they are different enough to stand out on their own and not get in each other's way."

One key difference is that in *GTA III* the streets run red with the warm blood of the freshly dead. In the happy-go-lucky world of *Crazy Taxi*, potential hit-and-run victims show amazing reflexes and athleticism, and prove impossible to mow down, something that may prove anathema to blood-crazed PC gamers.

According to Rawles, this is something PC gamers need to get over. "This is not how the game was designed and once gamers overcome the urge to try and run someone down (and they will try), they will soon realise that there are more important things to worry about such as avoiding cars and buildings rather than crashing into them! The best *Taxi* players will try not to hit any objects at all because the whole premise of the game is about speed."

Fair enough. *Midtown Madness* employed a similar system of pedestrians leaping out of the way, and that proved popular enough. Is there a direct comparison with that game?

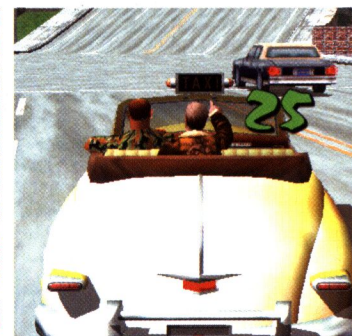
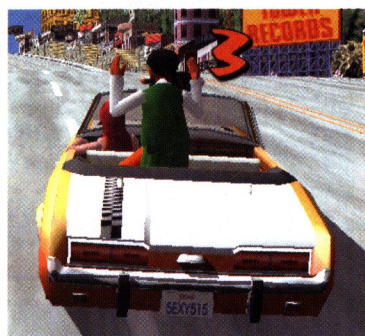
"Well, any city-based driving game can be compared to *Crazy Taxi* such as *Midtown Madness*, but this is where most of the similarities end. It could almost be classed as a genre-defining game..."

MUSIC SOUNDS BETTER

Of course it could. Whatever it is, it's certainly not a simulation, and while it may



The game features four different cabs and drivers, each with their own style, attitude and annoying voice.



It sold millions on Dreamcast and PS2, but will it work on PC? Probably, yes. But will it sell?

technically be classified as a driving game, it has more in common with *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* than it does with the latest Formula One title. Tricks and jumps are all part of your armoury, and the rules of physics are only very loosely adhered to. We've been playing an early beta version and it looks to be shaping up nicely, although with the sound currently restricted to just the overly cheery voices, it did eventually begin to grate.

The dialogue should prove less irritating against the background of a

bustling city and the obligatory angry music, which is one area where the PC version could differ from its console counterpart. The original Dreamcast game featured a skate punk soundtrack from The Offspring and Bad Religion, but the PC conversion could boast something else. As the producer admitted: "There will be four music tracks in the game but these are yet to be finalised, so I can't reveal any more about them. You can't cater for everyone's tastes so we are currently discussing the possibility of

allowing the player to swap the game CD with a CD from their own music collection. The game will automatically play the tracks from the inserted CD rather than the four default tracks for a more personal playing experience."

Given that they are only offering four tracks – one for each driver in the game – that will probably be a very good idea. Whatever happens, anything will be preferable to listening to Heart FM while slipping in and out of consciousness. Stop the car. [C]



Find the secret routes and high-tipping punters.

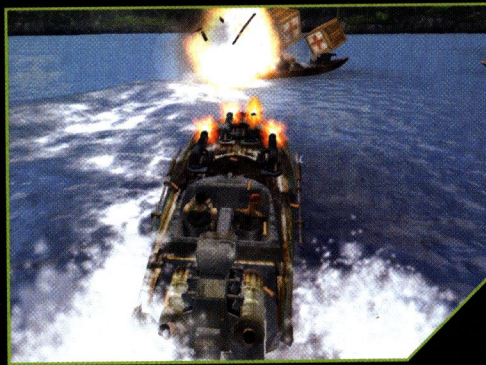
CRAZY TAXI DRIVER

SURELY A GAME TOO FAR FOR HOLLYWOOD

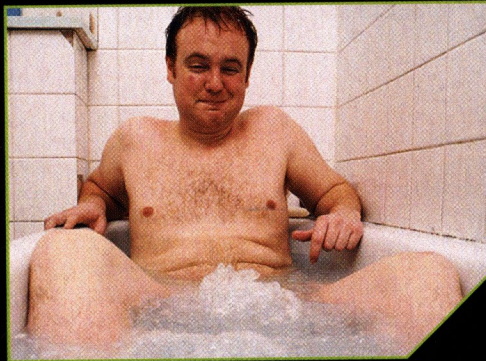
A film about a taxi driver might sound like the most boring thing ever, but Martin Scorsese proved otherwise in 1976 with the functionally named classic, *Taxi Driver*. Starring a menacing Robert De Niro as anti-hero Travis Bickle, a loner pushed to the edge by the sordid, violent scenes of the New York night shift, it's a powerful and dark experience.

Completely unlike *Crazy Taxi*, although amazingly there are plans for a film based on the game, director Richard Donner (*The Omen*, *Superman*, *Lethal Weapon I-IV*, *The Goonies*) has obtained the rights, and was quoted last year as saying: "I loved playing *Crazy Taxi* and I realised immediately that it had the potential to be a big summer event movie. Sega's game franchise has the perfect mix of action, humour, and great characters to translate to the big screen. While a lot of videogames are set in science-fiction environments or fantasy worlds, *Crazy Taxi* is set in New York City with a Russian cab driver. If you do this right, it'll be a lot of fun."

It's all gone very quiet since then though, and Sega is saying nothing. Frankly, we'd be amazed if it ever sees the light of day.

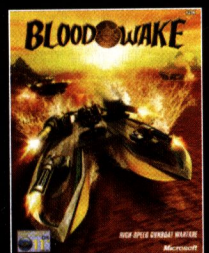


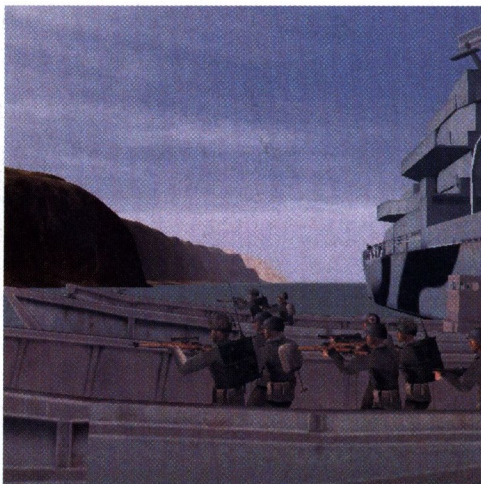
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Each tank needs a driver and a gunner.

War blimey

BATTLEFIELD 1942

Having marched through *Wolfenstein* and *Medal Of Honor*, **Richie Shoemaker** decides to get a lift to the next battle

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Digital Illusions CE
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE www.ea.com/eagames/
OUT September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Fight on foot and in tanks, planes or ships – arcade style
- 64-player maps up to 4km in size
- Unscripted bot AI for single-player games

"THIS IS NOT the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning." The famous words of our wartime leader Winston Churchill, referring of course to the defeat of the Luftwaffe after The Battle Of Britain.

Aptly we are at a similar juncture in PC gaming – perhaps the beginning of the end (or the end of the beginning) of a phase that has seen a blitzkrieg of WWII-themed games over the last two years across every major genre, from strategy and simulation with *Sudden Strike* and *IL-2 Sturmovik*, to the recent first-person shooters *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*. And with production lines still running on a war footing, there seems to be no let up in the number of WWII games coming our way. Whether or not fatigue could be setting in, one thing's for certain, it won't be over by Christmas.

Fortunately *Battlefield: 1942* looks like it could be a lot of fun, for while it may look slightly inferior to both *Wolfenstein* and *Medal Of Honor*, in the gameplay stakes it could well end up offering a great deal more. As you may already have worked out, the game will allow players to fight missions as diverse as the Normandy landings, the Arnhem parachute drop, Midway, the Tobruk siege and the massive Kursk tank battle. Even more important than the settings, however, is what you can do across them – an incredible 35 vehicles will be available to control, including tanks, jeeps and APCs on land, fighters and bombers in the air, destroyers at sea and even submarines under it. It's quite an impressive show of force, backed up by an arsenal of 19 different weapons,

ranging from pistols, sniper rifles and machine guns, to bazookas, mines, flame-throwers and hard-mounted weapons.

WORLD WIDE WAR

While you may be thinking this all sounds a bit over ambitious, let me just remind you that while *Battlefield* will offer a single-player game with bots, it will be online that developer Digital Illusions plans to take over from the likes of *Medal Of Honor*. Similar in scope to its predecessor *Codename Eagle* (which was a rubbish single-player game anyway), *Battlefield* has a lot more in common with games such as *Tribes 2* and the up-and-coming *PlanetSide*, except of course that rather than mincing about in *Power Rangers* costumes shooting popguns and flying around on butcher's blocks, you could be escorting a bomber manned by your mates, while your comrades bombard the enemy defences from a battleship as 30 chums storm the beach.

As with *Tribes 2*, up to 64 players can fight across a single map, some of which will be as wide as 4km, which on foot could take a good half-hour to run across.

Just to add a *Team Fortress* flavour to the mix *Battlefield* players will be able to pick a player class for their character, including Assault, Medic, Scout, Anti-tank or Engineer, and game modes will feature Team Deathmatch, Capture The Flag, Co-operative and Conquest modes – in which each team must capture and hold key areas, and the more they hold, the more it will eat into the 'lives' or respawns the other team has remaining.

It's with some thanks that despite its FPS mechanics, *Battlefield: 1942* has ambitions away from the realism of today's more contemporary tactical shooters, the emphasis is squarely on team-based arcade action. And as the WWII war machine grinds relentlessly on without apparent end, *Battlefield: 1942* seems destined to provide a good few of gaming's finest hours. **EV**

"While it may look slightly inferior to both *Wolfenstein* and *Medal Of Honor* in the gameplay stakes it may well end up offering a great deal more"



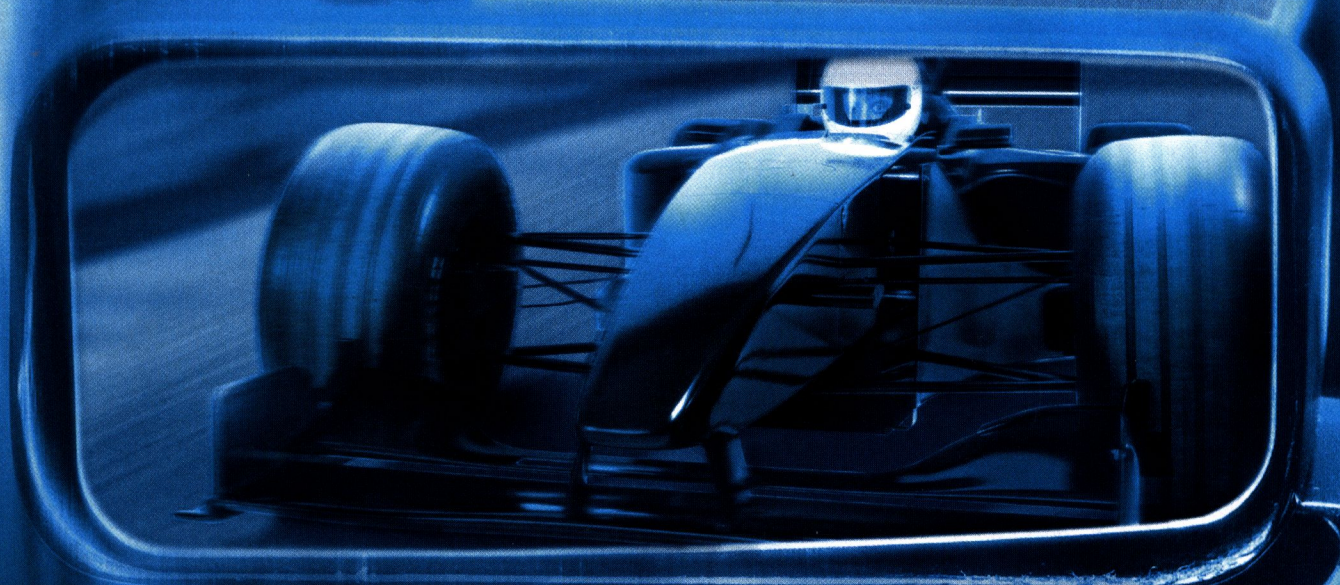
Even Japanese and Russian sides will get a go.



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CD
ROM



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GEOFF CRAMMOND'S

GRAND
PRIX
4

www.grandprixgames.com

PROFILE

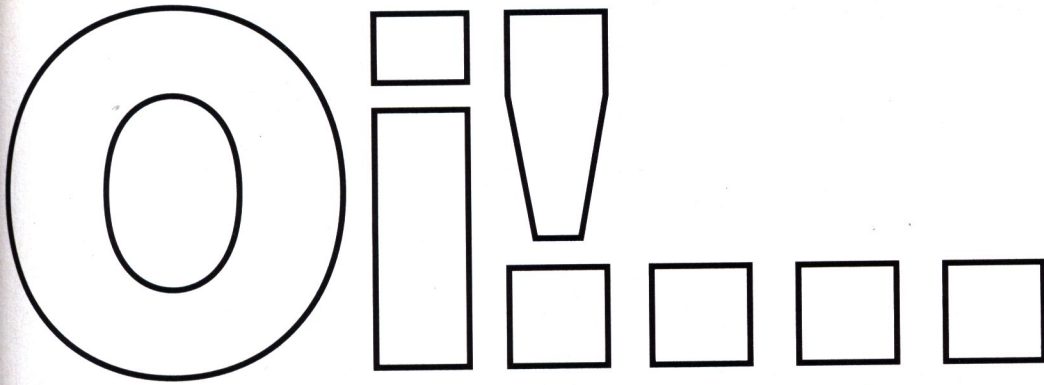
Jay Wilbur

**DEVELOPER:** Epic**POSITION:** Spiritual Advisor**FIRST FPS YOU EVER PLAYED:**

Hovertank was the first FPS I played. John Carmack wrote it when we all worked at Softdisk. It was the first John Carmack 3D game, way back in 1989. id started in my house, John and I shared a place and id started in the room next to my bedroom. I was involved with all of the earlier id FPS games such as *Doom* and *Quake*.



“There’s no reason why we couldn’t make it 200, 500 or even 1,000 times more detailed than *Unreal Tournament*”



WILBUR... What's your game?

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

He was there at the birth of the first-person shooter. Now Martin Korda finds out how Epic's Jay Wilbur plans to take the FPS to the next level

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Digital Extremes/Epic
PUBLISHER Infogrames
WEBSITE www.digitalextremes.com
OUT June

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Stunning visuals
- Over 100 times more detail than *Unreal Tournament*
- Team-based single-player game with a transfer market
- Enhanced AI

CV



EPIC

Epic is best known for the *Unreal* series and its ever-evolving *Unreal* engine.

1998 Jazz Jackrabbit 2

This second platform-game outing for the most fearsome bunny ever born, proved to be a hit with the PC gaming public.

1998 Unreal

The game that started a series. Going head-to-head with *Quake*, it lacked raw gameplay, but made up for it with some great visuals and exotic weaponry. Legend, who developed the add-on, are responsible for *Unreal 2*.

1999 Unreal Tournament

The best tournament-based FPS ever. Featuring some of the most realistic AI yet seen, superb atmosphere and an unsurpassed multiplayer mayhem. Still a classic to this day.

RARELY HAS A game taken the world by storm quite like *Unreal Tournament*. Stealing *Quake III*'s thunder and its crown like a quick fingered thief, it won the hearts of gamers and cynical-old hacks alike, consuming non-work time like a debilitating disease passed down LAN networks and online servers with the speed of venereal disease in a cheap Dutch brothel. With its masterful AI, its single-player games were rarely discernible from the frantic fragging mayhem of its multiplayer ones, which themselves caused more office rivalries than a 6ft blond temp.

Now, from the mists of the development world comes a new champion, set to sweep aside all who'd stand in its way, including the once great *Unreal Tournament*. The student is about to consume its master, dethrone its king and take its rightful place at the pinnacle of the arena based FPS genre. *Unreal Tournament 2003* is nearly upon us. We've played it. We've loved it. And while we were loving it we caught up with a true legend in FPS history, and producer of *UT2003*, Jay Wilbur, to see what he had to say about it and to talk about the phenomenon that is *Unreal*. Here's what he had to say...

PCZ Why do you think the *Unreal* series has captured the gaming public's imagination as much as it has?

JAY When the original *Unreal* came out, the world was dominated by *Quake*, which was a good game, but it was very brown. *Unreal* presented a whole new palette of colours. A whole new range of



"Take another stop and I'll blow your kneecaps off."

environments. It opened the game up to an expansiveness, which meant that the first time you walked out into the open, and looked around, you'd see a waterfall and birds flying in the distance. It opened up a whole new world for people. *Unreal Tournament*, took the series in a different direction. It expanded the *Unreal* franchise into a sort of multiplayer one-on-one sporting event.

PCZ What do you think the future holds for the series?

JAY We're making a commitment to the *Unreal Tournament* franchise. We have an engine that scales with hardware. Right now, the only limitation to expanding the resources used by the technology are the

hardware resources that are available to us. In *Unreal Tournament 2003*, we have 100 times more detail than in *Unreal Tournament*. There's no reason why we couldn't make it 200, 500 or even 1,000 times more detailed than *Unreal Tournament*. The only reason we're not doing this right now is that the hardware's not powerful enough yet.

PCZ What would you love to add to the game that you can't put in now due to these restrictions?

JAY Right now we're exceedingly happy with everything we have. We have huge polygon counts, all the characters are superbly detailed and the physics engine is excellent. Whereas in *UT* you'd shoot

someone and they'd fall halfway down the stairs and then stick out at right angles, in *UT2003* when you frag someone, they roll down the stairs and bounce on every stair along the way.

PCZ What are you most proud of in the *Unreal* games to date?

JAY The massive sales.

PCZ Numbers in the bank?

JAY Exactly. No but seriously. We always knew that each new game was a great one. However, in all cases, the magnitude of their success was a surprise. *UT* sold more than two million units, which was a phenomenal shock. Now we have to raise the bar and try and be even more successful with *UT2003*.

PCZ Which first-person shooters have influenced you most?

JAY *Doom* and *Wolfenstein* before that. But I was involved with both of those games during my days at id. As of late I've been playing a lot of *Medal Of Honor* and the multiplayer of *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*.

PCZ In what way is *Unreal Tournament 2003* the next generation for multiplayer first-person shooters?

JAY I think the team-based aspects of *UT2003* is the future. In *UT2003*'s

single-player game, you have to play as a team, rather than on your own. You'll have to set your team up, and recruit and train guys on your side.

PCZ A bit like the management aspects of *Speedball 2* then?

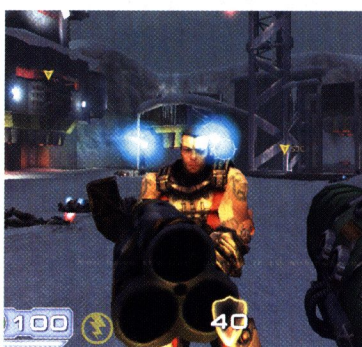
JAY Yeah, there are similarities. You'll have a system where one guy will be worth 2000 credits, and another will be worth, say, 5000 credits, and you'll then have to go and try to recruit them to join your team.

PCZ Can you see this spreading to an online version where all players are human controlled and have a value, with team managers buying and selling players on a virtual transfer market?

JAY That would be the next logical step. Who's to say whether that will ever happen? But when I close my eyes really hard and rub my crystal ball the right way, that's what I see.

PCZ What are the three most essential parts that make up a FPS, and how have you addressed them in *UT2003*?

JAY Atmosphere: you need a rich atmosphere, not necessarily realistic but it needs to be jaw dropping and immersive. Weaponry: you must have satisfying weapons. By that I don't necessarily mean powerful weapons. A weapon



Unreal Tournament 2003 is one of the best looking games we've ever seen.

doesn't have to be devastating to be satisfying. Take our default weapon in *UT2003*, the assault rifle, which is incredibly satisfying but not that powerful. It's very meaty and has an attached rocket launcher. The final one would be success: you need balance whereby the average player can start playing and achieve some level of success. I've got my wife to play *UT2003* and she's been able to get in there and gain some level of success, and she's never played a FPS before.

PCZ What's your favourite weapon in *UT2003*?

JAY The flak cannon. This time there's only one bounce for the flak instead of the five or six it had in *UT*, which made it too easy to get cheap kills. I think it's a lot better now.

PCZ The AI in *UT* was some of the best AI we've seen in a FPS. Who was responsible for it and what did they do to make it so convincing?

JAY The guy who wrote the AI, Steve Polge, has been working with us since before *Unreal Tournament*. He was the one who developed the AI for *UT* and refined it further for *UT2003*. He comes from an IBM networking background. He took some of the methodology associated with that and imported it into the bots. He's amazing. In *UT2003*, he's given them more of an ability to learn from their environments. So if they do something and it fails a couple of times, they'll try something else. We've always said that although we see *UT2003* as a multiplayer game, we've always held the belief that the game must survive in a single-player or a non-LAN environment. It's our estimation that of the two million or

so copies of *UT* we sold, only about ten per cent played it online. Which just goes to show the importance of the single-player game.

PCZ So what about the decision to make *Unreal II* purely single player. Why did you decide to get rid of the multiplayer?

JAY In *Unreal II*, it was our decision to pull multiplayer and have a razor sharp focus on the single-player game. We saw it as a necessity. We could have done an OK job with both the single and multiplayer aspects of the game or have kicked arse on one. We decided on the second. [X]

THE STATE OF PLAY




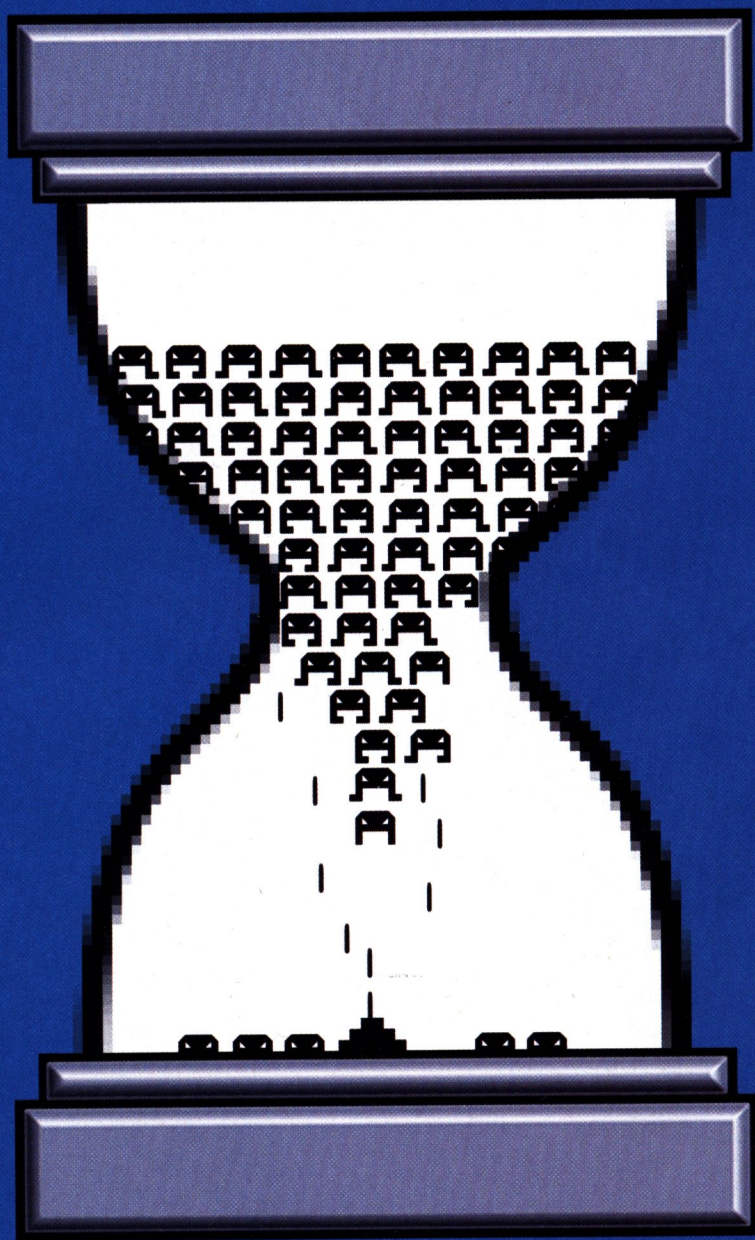
YES, YES, BLAH, BLAH, BUT WHAT'S IT LIKE TO PLAY?

'Good things come...' and all that. Having patiently waited several months to get my RSI ravaged hands on some code for *Unreal Tournament 2*, I mean *Unreal Tournament 2003* (as it's now strangely called, considering it's out this June), I finally got my wish in a dimly lit room housing a myriad of LANed-up PCs. And after two hours of intensive slaughter, I can officially tell you that it's looking rubbish. Ha. As if. The engine is incredible. Superb. Mind blowing. You can hide in grass, where each blade swings on the wind, the water effects look ripplingly realistic, and the character models are good enough to chat up (if you like psychologically imbalanced genetically-mutated killers or have a clown fetish). The gameplay is as manic and satisfying, as you'd expect, with complex indoor mazes blending seamlessly into lush, sprawling outdoor areas. The only disappointment is the lack of new weaponry. Sure all of the old hardware has had a make over, but each weapon is still much the same as in *UT*. Flak cannon, rocket launcher, chain gun, shock rifle etc. The plasma gun has now been renamed the link-gun, and several of these can be channelled into one beam to create a devastating green laser. It's the sniper rifle, however, that has had the biggest overhaul. Baring more than a passing resemblance to *Quake III*'s rail gun, it now fires blue bursts of energy, which although deadly, betray the sniper's position. Sadly, though, the spooze-gun and ripper are no more, but the default weapon is a meaty machine gun with a taped-on grenade launcher. I didn't get to see any AI, but we've been promised it'll be even more realistic than *UT*'s. Sounds great, plays great, looks great. Roll on June.



LOOK FORWARD

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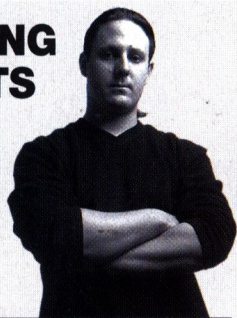
Master the strategic possibilities of four unique races.



www.blizzard.com

REVIEWS

SHINING LIGHTS



■ **REVIEWS EDITOR** Martin Korda

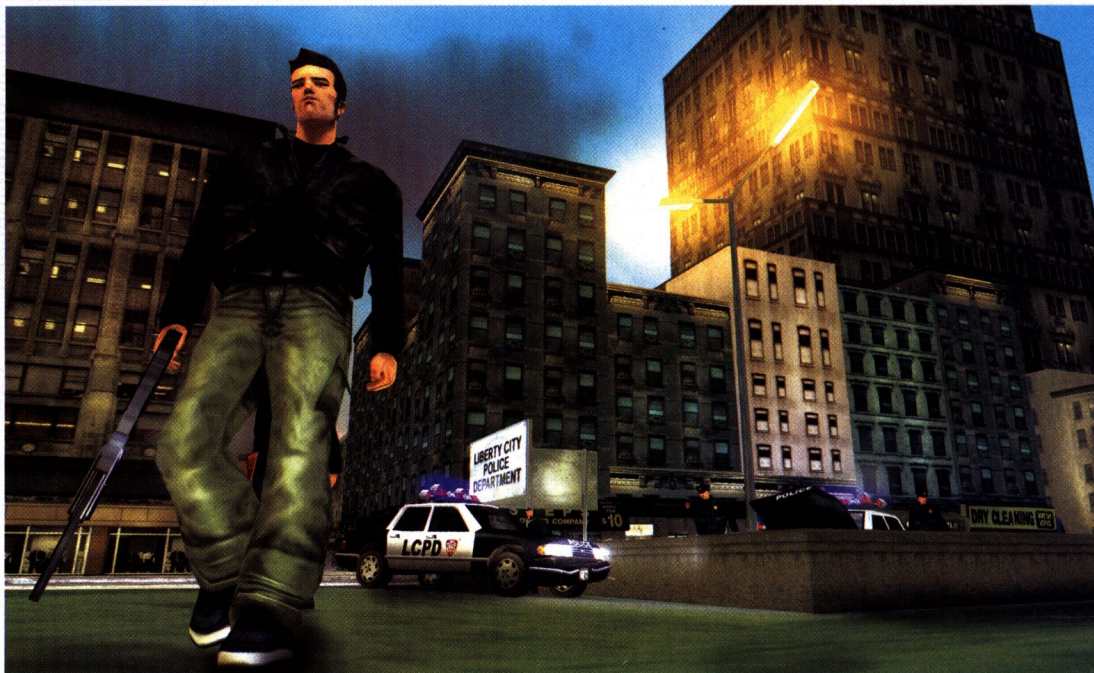
▲ This is what it's all about. Confused? Then flick through the next few pages and you'll see exactly what I mean. It's rare enough to find one gem of a game reviewed in each issue, a game which busts open its genre and tears out all of the preconceptions carried with it. This month, however, we have two.

Grand Theft Auto III, as you may have guessed from last month's exclusive preview, has not only managed to replicate the sheer entertainment factor of its PS2 counterpart, but takes it one step further in a way that only the PC can. Turn to page 70 and read Dave and Mark's thoughts on what is surely a contender for game of the year.

Not to be outdone, *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind* has also staked a massively convincing claim to being the game all others have to beat this year. Providing the kind of freedom that Eastern Europeans used to dream of and RPG fans still do, it's little short of a masterpiece. You can find Chris and Keith's superlative saturated comments on page 76.

Given this, it's hard to see how anything else could compete this month, but there are a couple who have a fair old go. EA's latest Formula One offering, the imaginatively named *F1 2002*, is as polished as ever, and features a debut for telemetry in the series. All you hardcore F1-nuts should be in your element, but even if you're just a casual F1 observer, you'll find more than enough to keep you entertained, just as Steve Hill did. To read his ramblings, head over to page 80. Finally, *Die Hard: Nakatomi Plaza*, to our surprise, proved to be far more than its graphics suggested, but you can probably work that out for yourself by turning to page 84.

▼ But before you think everything is looking totally rosy in the PC games world, be warned that there are about half a dozen turds in the mix as well. That's gaming for you.



GTA III received our highest score since *Half-Life* and *Black & White*. See why over the page.



Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.



The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly game publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic. Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

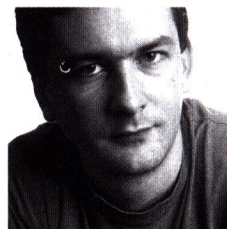
We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets reviewed by the right person, which means that you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Rhianna loose on *FIFA 2003*. We know that occasionally

you might disagree with us but we're big enough to take criticism. You can email your thoughts to letters@pczone.co.uk, or get them off your chest instantly on the forums at www.pczone.co.uk. If you think you can do better then why not send us a review – if it's good enough we'll print it in the magazine.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

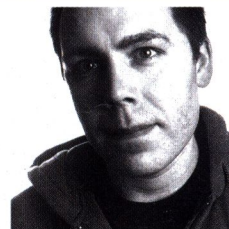
We review a lot of games before they go on sale, and if there are no public servers running before we go to print we won't second guess how the game's going to play online. Instead you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Update section. This is also the place where we take a fresh look at games we think have changed significantly – as is the case with persistent online games or through major patch releases.

MEET THE TEAM



DAVE WOODS

Grand Theft Auto III



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

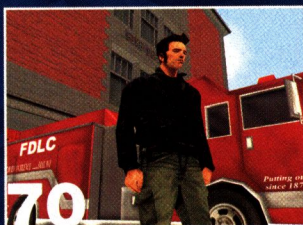
Final Doom

What are you playing?

If you could steal any car, what would it be and why?

A new Mini Cooper because I've got a Citroën AX at the moment and it's a bit of a mum-car.

The Army Surplus Special. It's a steamroller, Robin Reliant and a tank all in one.



70

GRAND THEFT AUTO III
It'd be a crime to miss it



94

RE-RELEASES
Games at a bargain price



96

UPDATES
Four multiplayer reviews



98

SUPERTEST
Battle of the Star Wars games

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

70 **GRAND THEFT AUTO III**

BREAKIN' THE LAW, BREAKIN' THE LAW

76 **THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND**

EXPERIENCE TRUE FREEDOM IN THIS EPIC RPG

80 **F1 2002**

TELEMETRY MAKES ITS DEBUT IN THE EA F1 FRANCHISE

83 **STEALTH COMBAT: ULTIMATE WAR**

SHHHHHHHHHH. DRIVE QUIETLY

84 **DIE HARD: NAKATOMI PLAZA**

YIPPEE-KI-YAY. TIME TO SHOOT SOME TERRORISTS

87 **CULTURES 2: THE GATES OF ASGARD**

MICROMANAGEMENT ON AN UNPRECEDENTED SCALE

88 **KING OF THE ROAD**

88 **ATROX**

89 **SPIDERMAN: THE MOVIE GAME**

90 **HOTEL GIANT**

90 **WORLD CUP MANAGER**

90 **MONSTERVILLE**

91 **JERUSALEM**

91 **THE SECRET OF NAUTILUS**

91 **PAC-MAN ALL-STARS**

94 **RE-RELEASES**

INCLUDING HOMEWORLD, THE NOMAD SOUL, DAIKATANA, TENNIS MASTERS SERIES, URBAN CHAOS AND MANY MORE

96 **UPDATES**

DUNGEON SIEGE MULTIPLAYER, SERIOUS SAM: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER MULTIPLAYER, BRIDGE COMMANDER MULTIPLAYER AND C&C: RENEGADE MULTIPLAYER

98 **SUPERTEST**

BATTLE OF THE STAR WARS GAMES. GALACTIC BATTLEGROUNDS VS X-WING ALLIANCE VS STARFIGHTER VS FORCE COMMANDER VS JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST



76



89

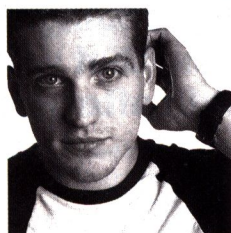


84



MARTIN KORDA

Die Hard: Nakatomi Plaza



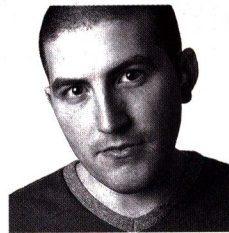
ANTHONY HOLDEN

Final Doom



RHIANNA PRATCHETT

Dungeon Siege



MARK HILL

Counter-Strike



STEVE HILL

F1 2002



CHRIS ANDERSON

The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind

Anything, because it's bound to be better than the heap of junk I've got now.

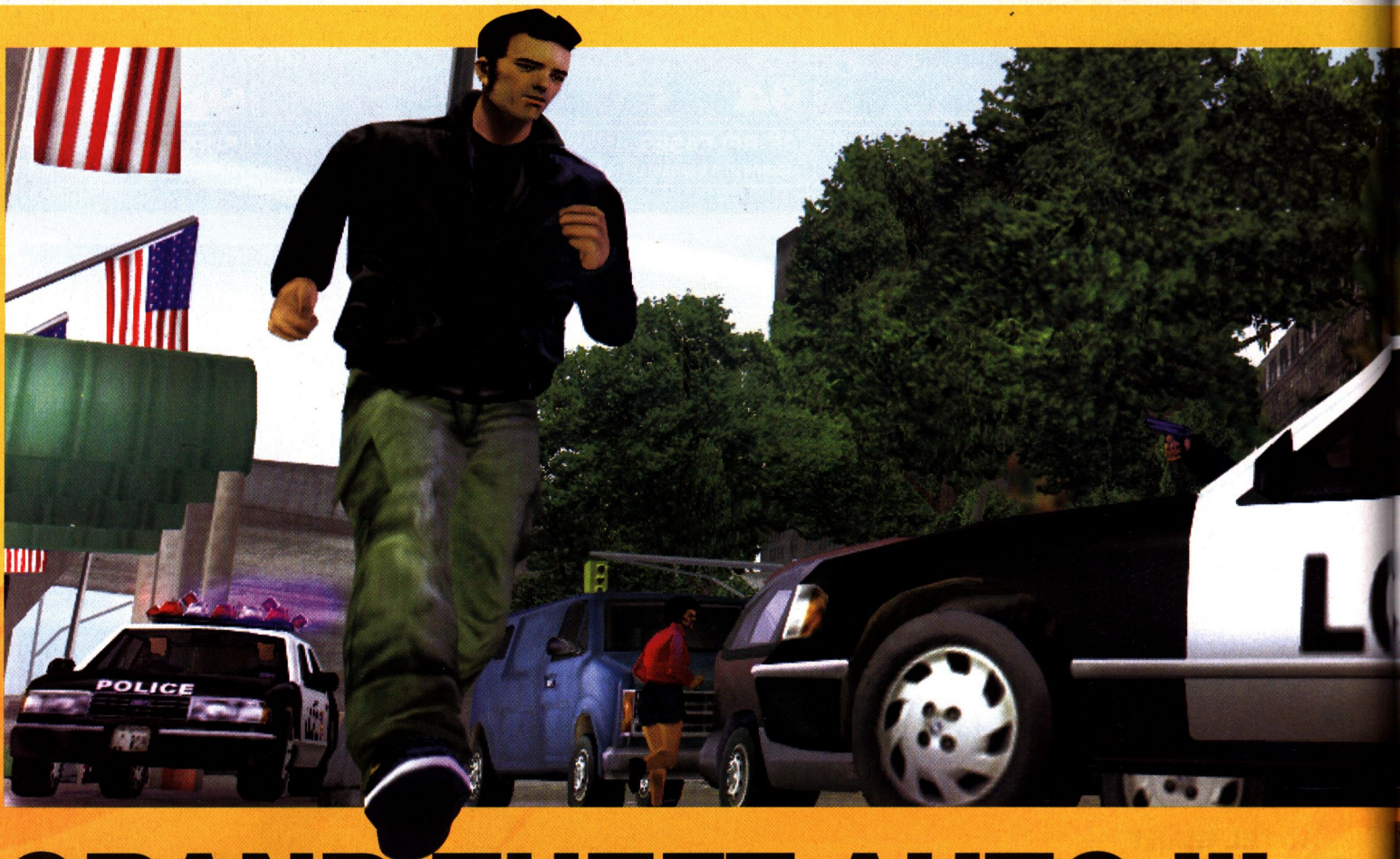
Hot Rod from Transformers. It speaks for itself.

A DeLorean, to see what happens when it gets to 88mph.

I don't need a penis substitute. Public transport will do.

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, because it can fly.

Claudio Ranieri's car. Just to piss him off.



GRAND THEFT AUTO III

■ £34.99 | Pub: Take 2 Interactive | Dev: Rockstar |
ETA: May 24 | www.gta3.com

REQUIRES PIII 450, 96Mb RAM and a 16Mb DX 8.1 compatible 3D card
DESIRES PIII 700 and a 128Mb RAM, 32Mb DX 8.1 compatible 3D card

All the cars you can drive and all the ladies you can ride. Dave Woods is here with scientific proof that crime actually does pay rather well



IMPERSPECTIVE

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

Reviewed Issue 96, Score 84%

Similarly modelled locations, without the detail, the ability to get out of your car or indeed kill anyone ever.

CARMAGEDDON TDR 2000

Reviewed Issue 94, Score 69%

Drive cars, mow down zombies and perform stunts before completing missions. Just like GTA III without any of the fun.

I USED to be a nice boy. I'd spend Sundays (after choir service) baking cakes with my mum (meringues being my speciality) and I used to own a pink skateboard on which I would stand and go down hills before picking it up and walking back to the top. Girls didn't used to fancy me, they thought I was 'sweet' and I passed all of my 'O' Levels with flying colours, barring French.

Then at around age 16 I discovered fags and booze and started spiralling down the garbage chute of life. Dalliances with drugs did me no favours and now aged 32 I've progressed to mowing down pedestrians, hi-jacking ambulances and ice cream vans, shooting the police, battering vagrants and paramedics and getting taught the ways of the Lord in dark alleys by ladies of ill-repute. The Tories would talk

about the gateway theory. The tabloids would probably blame computer games... And for once they'd be right.

STOP THAT TRAIN

Yep, *Grand Theft Auto III* is finally here, despite a long and

Despite persistent rumours, Rockstar told us it never had any intention of tacking a multiplayer option onto what it sees as a quintessentially single-player experience.

If you've played the game you can see sense in that.

off one of the best gaming experiences of all time.

FREEDOM CITY

And I don't use words like that lightly. I've been on ZONE for three long years now and thanks to a combination of bad luck,

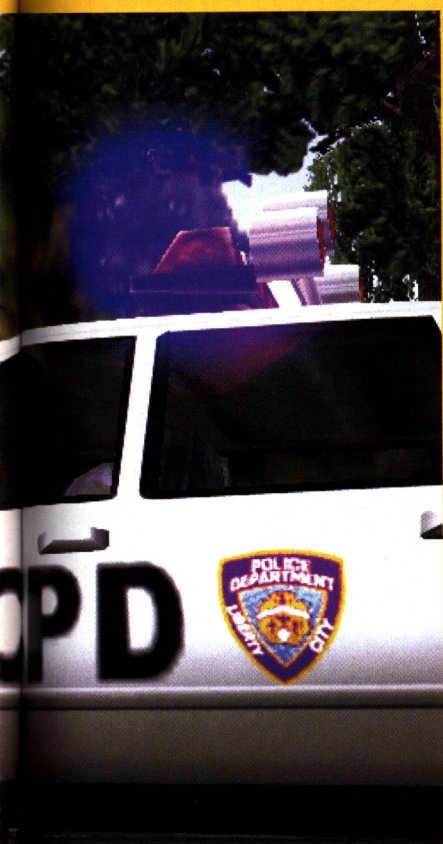
"At the end of the day, finding fault with a game like this is akin to bedding Kylie Minogue and complaining that you got a pube stuck between your teeth afterwards"

torturous wait that involved thumb-twiddling, persuading my partner that buying a PlayStation 2 would be a sound investment, blagging a copy from Take 2 and half-completing the game before phoning Take 2 on a daily basis enquiring where the hell the PC version was. Still, good things and all that... Bad news first though: there's no multiplayer.

The naysayers might have been appeased with the ability to race around the city but most of us got bored of *Midtown Madness* a couple of years back. And expecting a real MMORPG version of *GTA III* in addition to the single-player game was never going to happen. Look forward to it in the next version, but for now don't let it put you

lack of time and a reviews editor who refuses to give me anything that might be half-decent to review, I've never given 90 per cent to a game before. I started getting scared that I was going to finish my ZONE career a virgin, which is why I insisted *GTA III* was going to be mine.

For me it's a flawed masterpiece that manages to



Every single car handles differently and it's worth seeking out the hidden vehicles in each area.

Is it just me or is that the Fresh Prince Of Bel Air?

TALK RADIO

WHEN YOU'VE GOT IN-CAR ENTERTAINMENT OF THIS QUALITY, WHO NEEDS A GAME?

Videogames might have killed the radio star, but Rockstar is doing its level best to resurrect him. All the vehicles you use in the game are equipped with radios that pump out tunes from gangster rap to dub, through to Eurotrance and rock classics. When you're sick of the music flick onto Chatterbox, the game's satirical chatshow. It took me a while to work out that it's bloody funny – don't make the same mistake yourself. Get yourself a car, drive to a quiet lay-by and chill to the chat and the hilarious adverts. After all, even a psychotic criminal needs to kick back once in a while.

COMMERCIAL BREAK

"At Aeris we make high-quality footwear. In fact, you can buy Aeris running shoes in over 140 countries worldwide. In the past there's been some criticism about our workers, and that's why I'm here at one of Aeris' factories so you can meet some of them. Excuse me sir, do you enjoy your job here?"

Voice of very young boy: "It's fun. You get to play with knives."

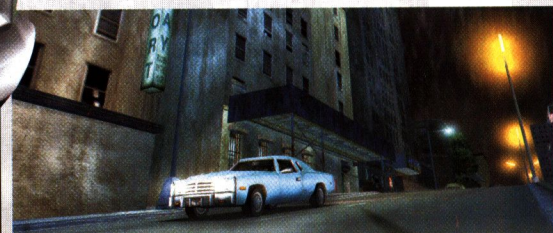
"I see. Is there a real sense of achievement?"

"My friend Joey sewed his hands together."

"Wow, you're learning real skills. And the salary and benefits?"

"Yesterday I made over a dollar."

"Y'see, that's the kind of dedication we have to our employees".



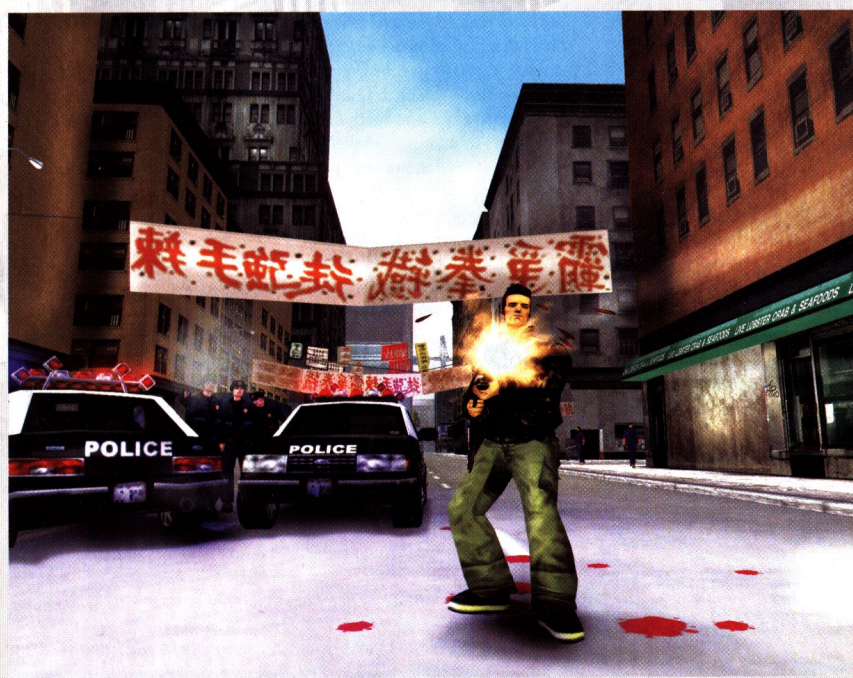
All we need is radio goo-goo, radio ga-ga.

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK, WE SALUTE YOU

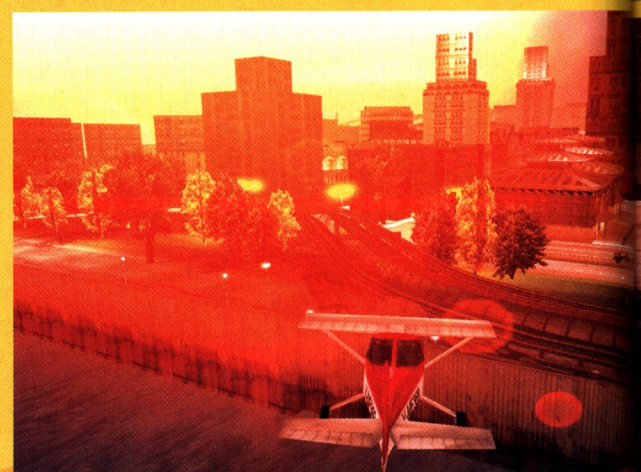
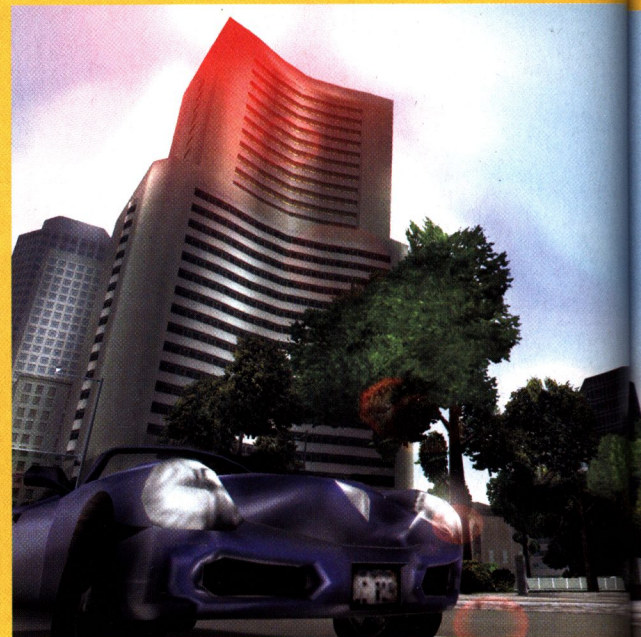
SLOPPY CONVERSIONS BEWARE – THIS IS THE REAL DEAL.

The Rockstar team are PC gamers, which is why *GTA III* was never going to be a sloppy conversion programmed by a couple of code-monkeys who map the gamepad to random consonants on the keyboard and leave us with a fudge of fixed resolution and console-style text. Unlike other games I could mention. You can now look around Liberty City the way God intended, with mouse and keyboard and a resolution that's only dependant on your graphics card.

But your mouse isn't just there to let you crane your neck and take in the cosmetic fluff. If you've played the game on your PS2 you'll know that one of the biggest flaws was the control system that made it almost impossible to aim your gun accurately, reducing certain missions to hit-and-hope of the worst kind. The game is now infinitely better for this, although if you want to get the best of both worlds you'll have to switch to a gamepad when in vehicle. Them's the breaks.



Looking around and shooting people in the head is ten times better and ten times easier.



Oh yeah, I just love the smell of Napalm in the morning...

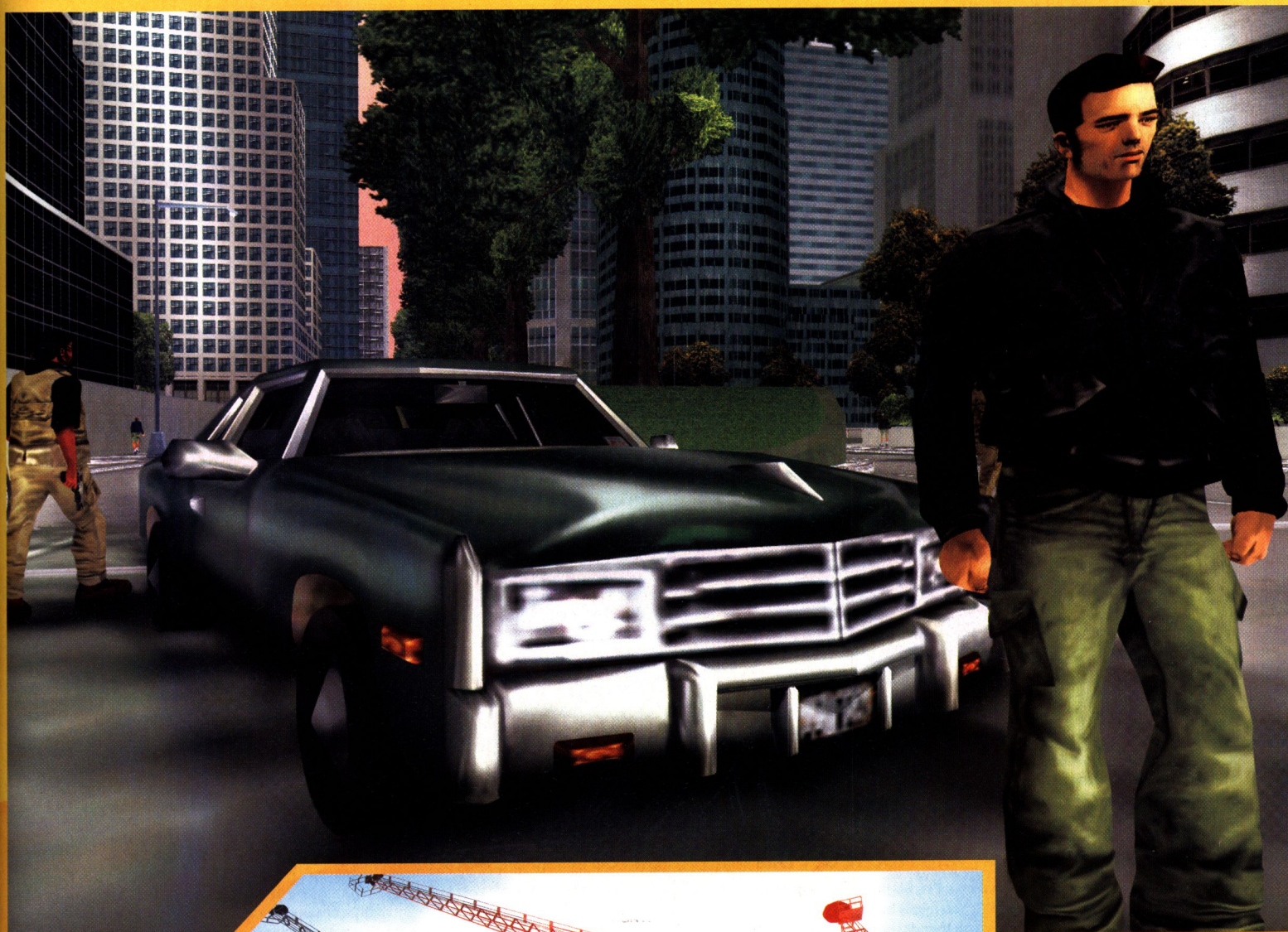
do almost everything right. Let me explain further. One of the big debates over the past couple of years has been about freedom. Some see the future of PC games lying in freedom of choice, where the developers create a world and a loose sketch of a game to cover the joins. Others think that linearity is the only way to sustain an involving dialogue. *GTA III* proves that you can have both depending on your mood. From the very first kick of the game you can pretty much do what you want, where you want, with whom you want. If you want to 'progress' through the game you can pick up a mission at any time, but the first thing you'll want to do is explore, take stock of your surroundings

and indulge in a spot of the old ultra-violence.

I FOUGHT THE LAW

It would be ludicrous of me to suggest that *GTA III* provides you with a fully working city, where you can enter any building and interact with any character. What the developers have done instead is create the illusion that the whole city is open to you. You can car-jack pretty much any vehicle you can see and tear around creating as much havoc as you want, as long as the filth doesn't catch you in the act. When this happens you're given a 'wanted' rating, signified by a set of stars. One star puts you in the Mark Morrison category whereby the police might give chase for a bit before deciding to

"The fact that every person that plays the game does it in a different way, is testament to the fact that the game works on every level"



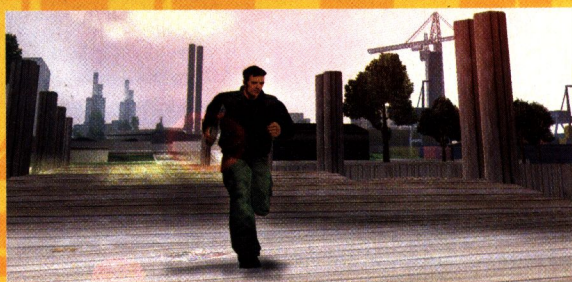
stop for a hot dog; five stars means that the whole of the LCPD is after you, along with helicopters, road blocks and snipers. It's a game in itself attempting to reach this sort of gangster status, before losing your wanted tag by either driving over the strategically placed stars dotted around the town, which reduce your criminal rating, or by taking your car in for a respray. (If you're interested I suggest smashing a few bystanders round the face with your baseball bat, waiting for the paramedics to turn up before turning your rage on them, nicking their ambulance and ramming the nearest police car.)



SKIN FLICK

LOOKS GOOD, SOUNDS GREAT

GTA III might not have multiplayer options, but to compensate for this you can play your own music through the integrated MP3 radio station and, if you're that sick and perverted, you can use a picture of yourself as a skin so you can literally put yourself at the centre of some pretty despicable crimes. If you've ever wanted to put your fist through someone's face without fear of reprisals you're now free to do so. Just try and keep it quiet, OK?



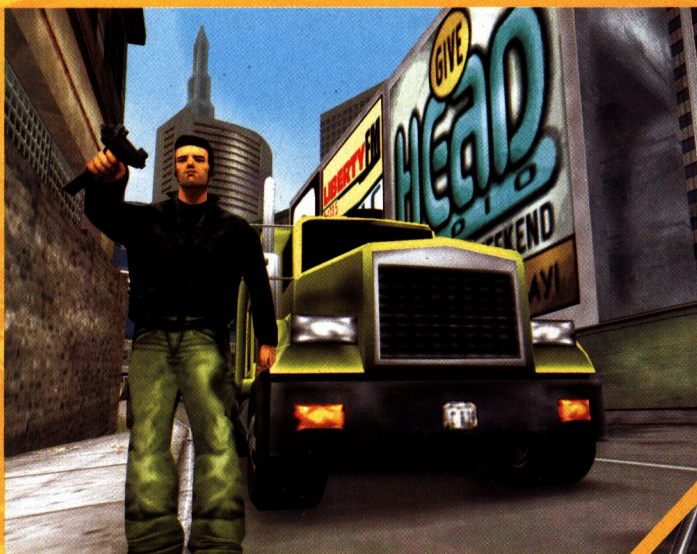
You might be made of metal but I'm not getting back in until you apologise.

Alternatively, you can just cruise the streets, taking in the sights, before trying for bonus points by launching yourself off the various ramps, bridges and flyovers, and somersaulting your way to a – hopefully – safe landing. Smash the car up too badly and you'll have to get yourself out quickly before the flames take hold and it explodes.

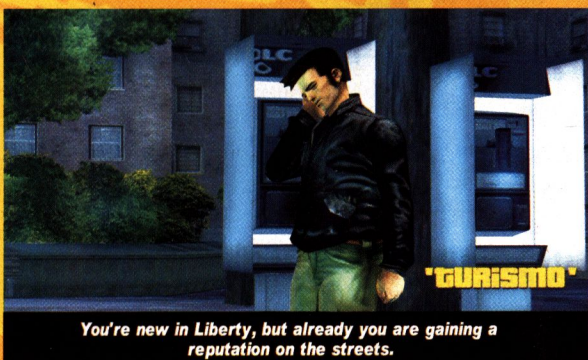
The fact that everyone who plays GTA III does it in a different way is testament to the fact that the game works on every level, and it's this quality, not the stunning graphics engine, that's had almost every PS2 reviewer in raptures. We might be the first to review it on the PC but we're not about to buck that trend, not even with our reputation.

NO WOMAN, NO CRY

But you might recall, I did mention the word flawed. Because, despite the fact that it's one of the best games I've ever played, there are holes to be



One road sign too many = one man against the system.



You're new in Liberty, but already you are gaining a reputation on the streets.

The first tough mission is a race against the Diablos.

"It might not dazzle you with its complexity, but the rest of it shines so brightly you'll have to wear shades"

JUST ENOUGH, JUST ENOUGH, IN THE CITY

WHO'D LIVE IN THE COUNTRY WHEN YOU'VE GOT THIS WAITING FOR YOU IN THE BIG SMOKE?

Grand Theft Auto III might look great on a PlayStation 2, but it buffs up even better on your PC. You might not think a small graphical facelift is enough to radically alter a game, and you'd be right. But what it does is offer even more immersion in a game world that was already well out there. You can have more fun just driving round, observing the inhabitants and taking in the sights as you

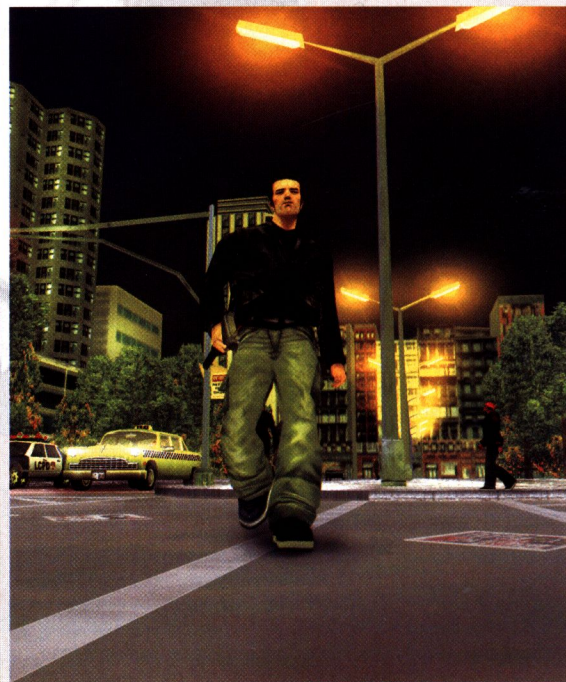
can playing almost any other game released this year in its entirety. The level of detail is eye-boggling and some of the extras that have been inserted for your pleasure are testament to the work that's been put in by Rockstar.

I've now played through the game twice and I'm still finding little quirks, like the workmen who play out a rendition of the Village People classic, *YMCA*. Crowds

gather round bodies and phone for ambulances, gunfights break out around you for no other reason than it's hot and there's not much else to do when you're an extra in a game. Planes soar overhead and certain ladies come to investigate when you hoot your horn when parked on the side of the road. Oh, and did I mention that it looks the business?



The AI traffic goes about its lawful business, stopping at red lights...



You do whatever the hell you want.

picked if you're the picky sort. Most of the blemishes are nothing more than gameplay mechanics (like the time I had every police car in the city after me but lost the lot by driving into a garage despite the fact that one of them followed me in) but when, on the odd occasion, your attention wanders, you realise that (whispers) there's not actually a great deal of complexity to the game. The missions that lead you through the story and open up the new areas, while hugely enjoyable, are relatively simple affairs: 'Take this car here', 'shoot that person in the head', 'blow that person's car up', that sort of thing. It generally involves getting from A to B in a set amount of time, and occasionally getting out of your car to shoot someone in the head.

What they do provide though is a refreshing change from the sort of shit we've been wading through for the past couple of years that masquerades under the 'I'm not really crap, I'm just complicated' banner. Games

THE KNOWLEDGE

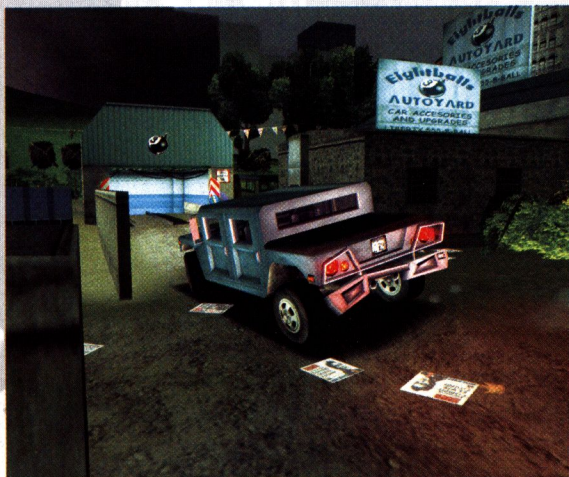
IT PAYS TO KNOW YOUR WAY ROUND LIBERTY CITY, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU NEED SOMETHING IN A HURRY

You might not be able to enter every building in Liberty City but there are certain stop-offs that you'll need to get yourself acquainted with quickly. The ammo shop, the respray shop (essential to get the rozzers off your back) and Eightball's

explosives cache are three of the first that you'll be introduced to.

The first time you're taken to these an icon will show up on your radar, but after this you're on your own. Remember that the city's huge and it's going to take you a fair

bit of driving to gain The Knowledge, so the best thing to do is look out for nearby landmarks first time around. It could prove invaluable when you've got the police on your tail and you're trying to remember where the garage is.



Eightball's joint: handy for specialist weapons and explosives.



Take your car in here and the cops won't recognise you.



Steal official vehicles and open up new bonus missions.

that you can play for hours on end without cracking a smile, and games that end up with you smashing the keyboard in frustration as you're quick-

saving for the 10th time in a minute. In *GTA III*, you can only save after you've completed each mission, and it doesn't really matter whether you end

up having to do the same one three or four times to get through. Each time it'll play out slightly differently or you'll find a faster vehicle hidden away that

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

I've talked about it in the main body of text but the only missed opportunity in the game is multiplayer. I'm not talking about the power to race against other players in a cheap *Midtown Madness* add-on. No, a game like this is begging to be converted into a full-on massively multiplayer online game, and rumour has it that Rockstar is working on it as you're reading this review. Class.

lets you breeze through a race you were previously struggling to complete in your icecream van.

In any case, how can you complain about a game that offers up a mission entitled 'Big 'n' Veiny', where you have to steer a rickety van around town picking up piles of discarded animal porn that's been dropped by someone out of their mind on spunk. I haven't had so much fun in ages and if Rockstar want to employ me as their evangelistically inspired preacher I'd be more than happy to quit my day job.

made it all the sweeter now that it's here. What's more, it's a tantalising taste of what's to come in the next version. Put the same game in a complex city where you can go in every building, and where each character has a life and a reason to be in the game beyond acting as eye candy and I reckon you'd have the perfect game. Add in the fabled multiplayer element to the proceedings and I'd have the perfect excuse to finally get involved in an MMORPG. For now, *GTA III* will do very nicely indeed, thank you very much. **PCZ**

SECOND OPINION

MARK HILL SAID IT WOULD BE GREAT. AND HE WAS RIGHT

They were going to have to do something really stupid to muck up the PS2 masterpiece and, as expected, they've done the opposite and actually bettered it. The crisper and more detailed graphics are just the start of it, because in the end it comes down to it playing like a proper PC game. Once you play it with mouse and keyboard it's hard to imagine how we could ever have played it another way.

Your character is a complete idiot. The kind of person who thinks Ivanhoe is a type of Russian prostitute. He's ready to do anybody's bidding, gets shafted by all his bosses in turn and still

keeps coming back for more. But the game itself is an intelligent orchestration of noise and violence that maintains a very cohesive shape despite its freeform nature.

Although it's a shame you can't run over a line of Hare Krishnas anymore, there's no doubt that this is a true classic. Because it does what all classic games should do: appeal to people who wouldn't normally play the genre. I don't play driving games, but I could happily drive around for hours in *GTA III*. You may not play shooters, but we guarantee you'll get a thrill from this one. Absolutely essential.

SPINNING AROUND

Because, at the end of the day, finding fault with a game like this is akin to bedding Kylie Minogue and complaining that you got a pube stuck between your teeth afterwards. *GTA III* does so much right that you'll never say a word against it. It might not dazzle you with its complexity, but the rest of it shines so brightly you'll have to wear shades. I'd stake my life that not a single person that buys it will regret the decision and I'm willing to fight anyone that says otherwise.

OK, we've had to wait a long time for it on PC, but it's just

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Freeform, yet linear at the same time
- ✓ Superb visuals
- ✓ Attention to detail is second-to-none
- ✓ Hilarious
- ✗ No multiplayer
- ✗ Some missions are just a bit too easy

95

Fun for all the family



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

■ £34.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: Bethesda Softworks | ETA: May 31 | www.elderscrolls.com

REQUIRES PIII 500, 256Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** A P4 and a Geforce 3 are ideal

The search for the ultimate single-player RPG could well be over, at least as far as **Chris Anderson** is concerned



"Morrowind puts the competition to shame"

INPERSPECTIVE

DUNGEON SIEGE

Reviewed Issue 114, Score 89%

A visually impressive role-player which concentrates heavily on action, but has nowhere near the depth of *Morrowind*.

DEUS EX

Reviewed Issue 93, Score 94%

Deep and challenging, *Deus Ex* is the RPG of choice if fantasy doesn't kindle your role-playing fire.

SO, YOU'VE got your latest RPG installed on your hard drive. You fire it up and start playing. You know what to expect. Kill monsters, gain experience points – kill enough of them and you gain levels. The only thing that makes this one different from the last one is the graphics have changed and it has a new plot.

You may or may not be happy about this, but nine times out of ten this is exactly what you are going to get. It's called working to a successful formula. Game developers don't like veering away from the norm – they know what works and they're not afraid to use it. Online RPGs are more guilty of this than their single-player counterparts, but

a general lack of imagination is apparent in the make-up and design of most role-playing games on the PC, and it's about time something changed.

The people to do something about this state of affairs are Bethesda, and the result of their labours is a game called *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*. There are so many ways in which *Morrowind* puts the competition to shame that it's difficult to know exactly where to start. The beginning seems as good a place as any.

PRECISE PERSONA

At the beginning of the game you need to choose which race and class you are going to play. There are three ways of going



"I shall cut you in two with my sword, you cad."



Trade your rubbish loot with NPCs for stuff that's actually worth having.

about this. The first method is fairly straightforward: pick from a list of predefined classes which specialise in magic or mêlée or a mixture of both – in other words, standard RPG character selection procedure. The second method is more entertaining: answer a set of questions and the game will generate a character based on your answers. This is not entirely dissimilar to the character

generation process in the *Ultima* series. The third method is a lot more time-consuming, but ultimately the most rewarding and without a shadow of a doubt the best choice if you want to succeed in the game: create a custom class in which you decide which major and minor

skills your character will have and what their main attributes will be. Using this option, you can create a character that does all the things you want them to do.

This will not make much sense to you the first time you play. In fact, choosing a predefined class is recommended until you learn how to play and understand what the different schools

of magic do and how the different skills affect you as you explore the game world. I can almost guarantee that once you have played for a while you will start the whole game again from scratch and create a character knowing exactly what skills you want them to be proficient in, and *Morrowind*'s custom character option will give you exactly what you want in every department.

What this effectively means is that once you have created your ideal character, you can play exactly how you want to, and this, more than anything else, puts *Morrowind* head and shoulders above the rest of the single-player RPG crowd. But this would all be in vain if you had come this far only to be faced with yet another RPG that encourages you to plough through as



MISSED OPPORTUNITY



OK, so it's not perfect. Combat is real-time but fairly straightforward. You can alternate mêlée moves but it doesn't seem to make much difference. What would have been nice is some visual or textual feedback on how much damage you're doing to your enemy (as it stands you know you have the upper hand when, well, when they're dead). This is a minor blemish on an otherwise classic role-playing game.

many monsters as possible and gain levels in time-honoured fashion. Thankfully, *Morrowind*'s character development process is a lot more imaginative and satisfying than that.

THE NUMBERS GAME

Character advancement in each skill is entirely dependent on how often you use it. Use bladed weapons constantly and your skill will go up accordingly. Use spells from the school of

destructive magic and your skill in this school of spells will raise over time. *Dungeon Siege* has a similar character advancement system, but whereas in *Dungeon Siege* there are only four areas in which you can specialise, in *Morrowind* everything you do raises skill in this way. Repair your armour between battles and watch your armour skill go up, even running will increase your athletics skill. It's such a simple concept, but an excellent one. Instead of mindlessly bashing things in the head to go up a level, you will only reach the next one when you have accumulated ten new skill points. As long as ten of your major or minor skills go up (it doesn't matter which ones) you will advance a level.

The wonderful thing about this method of character development is you are rewarded with levels through doing the things you like to do most. Additionally, if you are in a hurry to go up in level (or you just want to get better at a particular skill and don't want to do it through practical use) you can pay a trainer to advance you in whichever skill they specialise in. What this all boils down to is you spend less time doing things just to 'level up' and instead just get on with playing the game, safe in the knowledge that your important skills are being developed as you play. It's the most rewarding and satisfying character development system we have seen in any RPG since *Ultima Online*, and that's saying something. And it gets better still...

LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

While you start the game with no faction alignment you will quickly discover there are a whole host of guilds and factions who are more than ready to employ your services and reward you as you advance through their ranks. You can join any of the guilds in *Morrowind* – the mage, fighter and thief guilds being the obvious choice for specialist classes, but there are a host of other guilds too. Each one will give you simple tasks to start with and then send you on more challenging missions as you rise in level, obviously with much higher rewards for successful completion of the tasks you have been set. This is typical of the totally open-ended nature of the game. You are not forced down a set path at any point in time. There is a main



Brace yourself because this is going to hurt.



There isn't much to melee combat: point and click, literally.

quest, and you can see this through to the end and complete the game if that's your thing. But if you do just stick to this path, you will miss much of what *Morrowind* has to offer.

The plot is hugely intriguing and twist-ridden, one which is so compelling you'll feel totally immersed in it. Rumours that an evil Nerevarine (dark elf) cult is gaining influence throughout the land abound, and it's up to you to find out

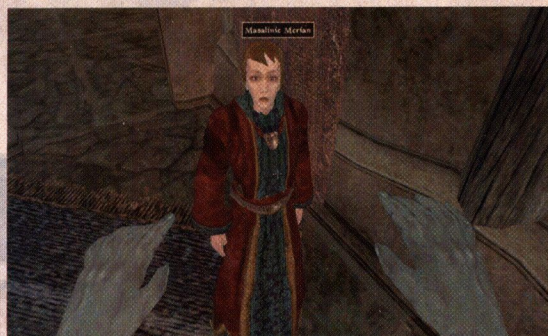
why and how to stop it. I don't want to give too much away, but believe me, it's a thrilling ride.

Just exploring the breathtaking landscape is a joy in itself (*Morrowind* sports the best graphics of any RPG to date) and there are so many characters to interact with, many of whom will give you detailed information on places and events, you will want to explore every part of the gaming world before

GETTING AROUND

YOU DON'T WANT TO SPEND HOURS GETTING FROM A TO B, DO YOU? NO, THEN READ ON...

With a game world as big as the one in *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*, it can take quite a long time getting from A to B during a quest. While you'll be quite happy exploring on foot to begin with, just to take in the beautiful graphics, as you progress through the game you'll want to get to places fast. This is how you do it...



Teleport from one mage guild to another.

MAGE GUILDS

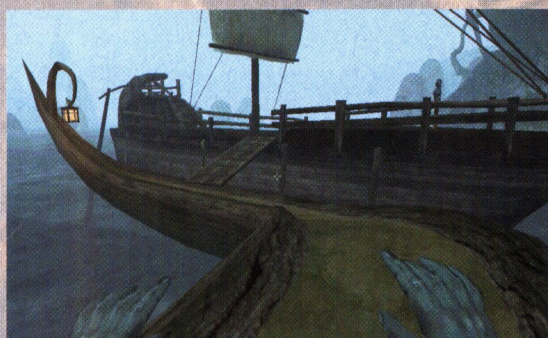
Each mage guild has a magic user who can teleport you to the other mage guilds in the game. This only covers four locations, but it's still a big help, particularly at the start of the game.



The Silt Strider service: cheap and fast.

SILT STRIDERS

Silt Striders are huge beasts which can take you round most of the game world. For a small fee you can get almost anywhere you want to go (or at least close by).



There's a boat service at every dock. Handy that. Here's one we made earlier.

BOATS

Most of the big cities have docks where you can take advantage of boat services (and some of the smaller villages too). Many of the places not covered by the Silt Strider service can be easily reached by boat.





Total freedom means you'll spend most of your time just exploring the gorgeous game world.



"I've been guarding this staircase for 374 years."

SECOND OPINION

KEITH PULLIN STOPS PLAYING MORROWIND FOR JUST LONG ENOUGH TO GIVE US HIS OPINION



If you're one of those people who believes that open-ended games lack direction and

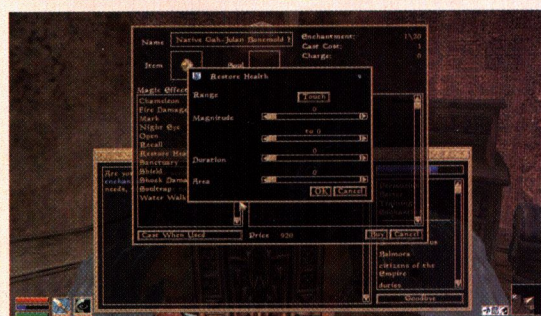
are boring, play *Morrowind* and prepare to eat your words. I've been playing it obsessively for a week now and haven't even come close to sampling the full extent of the main quest. In fact, I've become so utterly obsessed with wandering around talking to goat-legged travellers and exploring the incredibly detailed and beautiful world I frankly couldn't give an Argonian's backside whether I ever make it to the end of the main quest or not.

There's no denying it: *Morrowind* is a stupendous

role-playing achievement. Its depth of character development makes the once mighty *Deus Ex* look like a simple FPS. In fact, it makes virtually every other RPG ever created look dull and shallow in comparison. Truly, *Morrowind* is the closest gaming has ever come to a living, breathing world where you can do anything and interact with everything around you.

The only criticism I can think of is that it's single-player only. But what the hell, I've only got a crappy 56K modem connection anyway, so what do I care? As far as I'm concerned I will (eventually) play this game to the very end, and then I'll do it all over again with a different character. Freedom truly is a wonderful, wonderful thing.

SPELLS R US



Items you make yourself are far more effective than the ones you can buy.

So you don't like the spells in the game? No problem, make your own. Go to a mage with spell-making abilities and you can make a spell that combines any of the spell effects you've learned thus far for a price. Similarly, you can enchant items with spell effects if your enchant skill is high, or make your own potions if you are sufficiently skilled in alchemy. All of these abilities play a large part in *Morrowind*, and making your own spells and items can make the more difficult parts of the game a lot easier.

making any serious headway into the main quest. It's the sort of game you just don't want to finish because you know that when you do there will be

that you will often have to sit back and take stock of the situation before deciding what to do next, and you can keep track of everything that's happened in

Even when you have finally finished the main quest and reached the end, you can acquaint yourself with the construction kit that comes

"The most accomplished and absorbing title to come our way in a very long time"

nothing of even vaguely similar quality to occupy your time when you do. Yes, it is that good. There are so many different things to do at any one time

an excellent journal which has hyperlinks. These give you detailed information on all the people, places and things you have come across to date.

with the game. This allows you to make your own adjustments to the game world and play through it again.

It remains to be seen how far people go with this feature, but it's a very powerful tool and the potential is certainly there to expand greatly on the existing game world for those with a little imagination. As it stands, the single-player game currently has no equals in the RPG genre. It's the most accomplished and absorbing title to come our way in a very long time, and if you have even a casual interest in RPGs you owe it to yourself to get your hands on a copy. So go lose yourself in a title which has emerged as a leading contender for game of the year. **PCZ**



You'll meet a whole range of strange and exotic NPCs.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Incredible depth of gameplay
- ✓ Beautiful graphics
- ✓ Hugely satisfying character development
- ✓ Massively open-ended
- ✗ No multiplayer
- ✗ Fairly simplistic combat

94

All hail the new king of RPGs



Formula One: the only safe cure for insomnia.

F1 2002

■ £29.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: Image Space Incorporated | ETA: July 7
| www.easports.com

REQUIRES PIII 400, 128 Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 733, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card and a Force Feedback Wheel

EA Sports has pulled out all the stop for its latest F1 adventure, Steve Hill settles down for a test drive

FORMULA ONE

games: love them or hate them, you can ignore them. And many people do, dismissing them as too dry, overly technical, and – gasp – boring. All valid points of course, and accusations which can be levelled not only at the games, but also at the sport they depict. Make no mistake, Formula One can be a dull sport to watch, and is best observed through one eye while nursing a

plebs area at Silverstone, which involved getting very wet and having to check in the paper the next day to see who won.

SPEED KINGS

Not the ideal spectator sport then, but for the 22 lunatics at the wheel it's an absolute white-knuckle ride that pisses on any rollercoaster, and one which *F1 2002*, manages to replicate in unparalleled detail for a PC F1

and it almost feels as though you're in the thick of it, with the force feedback sending shudders up your forearms as you glide over every bump and divot.

Whatever your thoughts about Formula One, *F1 2002* is a game of such quality that it actually makes you care. It's so immersive, detailed and entertaining that you actually want to try really hard in

“It looks and sounds brilliant, has all the latest data and even the AI is up to scratch”

hangover and/or cupping your balls. Whatever you do, don't make the mistake of actually attending one of these cursed events. I speak as someone who has twice made this error, the first time on an all-expenses paid jolly to Spa, in Belgium. Holding a cherished gold ticket afforded me the best seat in the house, providing a unique opportunity to be deafened and to enjoy a close-up view of the occasional streak of colour while watching the race on an overhead television. The second occasion was in the

sim. Imagine tearing along a thin strip of tarmac at 200 miles an hour, with your arse cheeks mere inches from the asphalt, and death mocking your every mistake. Well imagine no more. Set yourself up with a decent wheel, slouch down in your chair and move close to the monitor

qualifying, in order to secure a decent position on the grid, where split seconds can make the difference between the contenders and the also-rans. It's so much fun that you won't even want to restart every race when your car picks up any damage. You can even safely



INPERSPECTIVE

GRAND PRIX 3

Reviewed Issue 94, Score 80%
It took so long to arrive, that it was already outdated on release.

F1 2001

Reviewed Issue 109, Score 83%
Slightly inferior in every department and lacking telemetry.





5

K. RAIKKONEN
MCLAREN

SIEMENS



Not that Jordan.



Among the superfluous camera angles there are even some useful ones.



TELE ME TRY



MORE GRAPHS PLEASE

Following last year's positive review of EA's F1 game, we received a sackload of mail (well, one crudely daubed letter) berating our lack of professionalism for recommending a game that didn't feature telemetry. We weren't overly sure what it was then, and we've only just about worked it out now, the reason being that this is the first time an EA F1 game has featured it. In fact, *F1 2002* has stacks of the stuff, and after each session you can sit and stare at countless graphs that chart your lap times and performance at each corner and at every straight, until your eyes bleed. You'll need to really know your stuff if you're going to either enjoy or understand what it's all about, but if you are a hardcore F1 obsessive, you'll be in your element and will find that it can make up those few extra split seconds for you. Happy now?

play full-length races, and carefully judged pitstops can give you a huge advantage. It's almost unheard of from an F1 game, and as with its predecessor you can customise each race to either anally-hardcore proportions or simply play from a more arcadey behind-car viewpoint. Buy *F1 2002* and you'll be able to live the dream, in whatever way you may envisage it.

AUTOMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE

However, if you want to play the game as realistically as possible, you're going to have to prepare yourself for some extensive car tweaking. It's easy to dismiss this as essentially a typical EA Sports wash-and-brush-up of the last version of the game, but on closer inspection you'll soon find that this year's model comes with far more features (see boxout), catering for F1 lovers of all abilities from Richie Shoemaker to Michael Schumacher.

With all the aids switched on, it's virtually monkey proof,

enabling you to tear round the tightest of tracks with aplomb. However, simply switch the autobrake off and you realise you haven't actually been playing the game at all, rather that it's been playing you. There are so many driver aids – brake, steering, shift, clutch, invulnerability, stability – that finding a happy medium is almost impossible, unless of course you're content to play the game as a glorified destruction derby. Worse still, all of the aids can be altered in-game, so you often find yourself switching off the autobrake in an attempt to make up time, and then flicking it back on as you approach a tricky chicane. It's tantamount to cheating. And that's before you've even started tinkering with the AI drivers' ability and aggression.

TOWING THE LINE

It's a minefield, but to be honest that's the only real quibble with what is a superb Formula One game. It looks and sounds brilliant, has all the latest data and even the AI is up to scratch.

Traditionally the cars stick to the racing line like shit to a blanket, but here they do seem to have some sense of self-preservation, although that said, they aren't completely averse to giving you the occasional nudge, making for some seat of the pants racing.

Hats off to EA then, whose ruthless business model has seen them forge ahead in the F1 stakes. While Geoff Crammond takes an age to deliver outdated efforts, *F1 2002* is sitting pretty in pole position. **EW**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ This season's data
- ✓ Dynamic weather effects
- ✓ Excellent presentation and sound
- ✓ Telemetry
- ✗ Poor in multiplayer
- ✗ Too easy to cheat in game

84

Front of the grid

PC
CD

Survey the landscape of your empire

INDUSTRY GIANT II



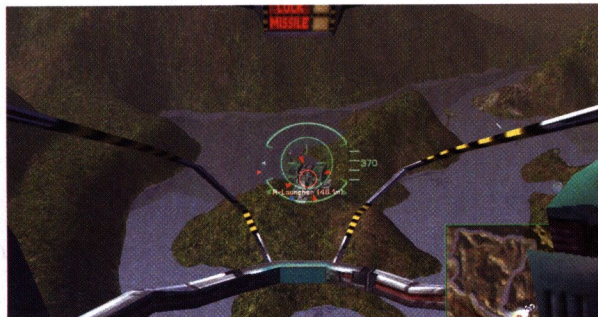
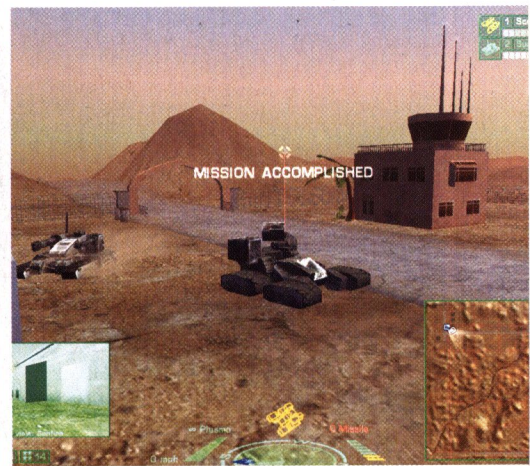
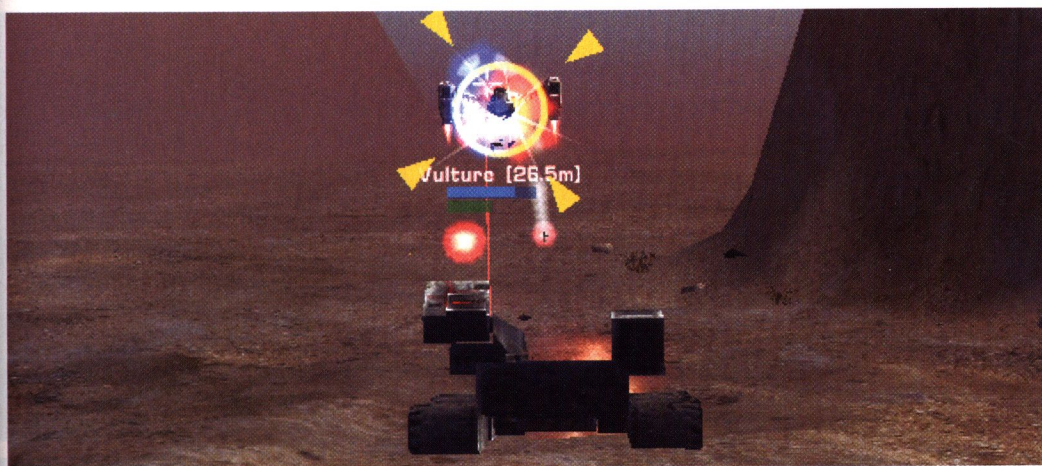
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- Over 50 different means of transport (lorries, trains, ships, planes, etc.) giving huge scope for building trade and transport businesses
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- Excellent graphical representation of all buildings and vehicles - developed from actual models giving a realistic impression of the time period

Greed is good

JoWood Productions



In the future, all wars will be fought like this, which gives us nothing to look forward to.

STEALTH COMBAT: ULTIMATE WAR

■ £34.99 | Pub: Mindscape | Dev: Deck 13 Interactive | ETA: June 21 | <http://stealthcombat.cryogame.com>

REQUIRES PII 300, 32Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 800, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

Only Steve Hill and an array of hi-tech hardware can save the world in this vehicle-based shooter. Well, that's the world doomed then...

IT'S FAIR TO say that PC games suffer from a bit of an image problem. Whereas consoles play host to brightly coloured worlds and madcap characters, the beige box is blighted with goblins and dour futuristic warfare. Example? How about this from the *Stealth Combat* press release: "The year is 2038 and war is raging between the Economic and Military Alliance and the

Great Empire..." It's not laugh-a-minute stuff, is it?

We've sat through the intro several times, and have still yet to grasp the exact geopolitical nuances of the plot. Suffice to say that the world is teetering on the edge of nuclear annihilation, and this less than cheery scenario gives you the opportunity to pick sides and embark on a number of pre-determined

military missions. If you side with the Alliance you play a bloke called Streak, if you go with the Empire, you're a Doris called Moon.

ARMAGEDDON

Either way, you get to control a lot of hardware, be it jeeps, tanks, Mechs, helicopters or amphibious vehicles. There's not a great deal of thought involved, as missions essentially consist of following directions, setting a course for a waypoint and shooting whatever's there. Instructions can be given to other vehicles, and in a fairly blatant stretching of practicality, you can instantly switch from one cockpit to another in the heat of the battle.

In direct contradiction of the game's title, some missions involve about as much stealth as driving a loud machine and causing large explosions, ie not much stealth. However, there are those where skulking around is

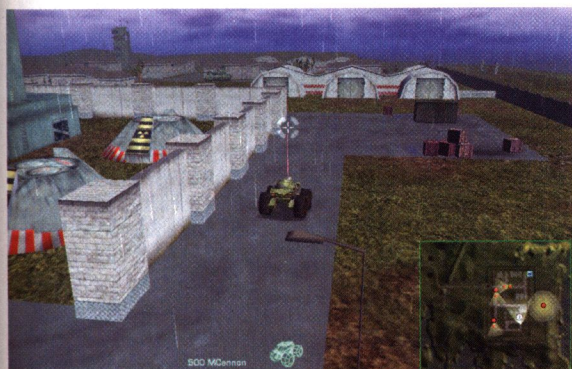
required, and this is where the game is most infuriating. Lurking in the shadows on foot is a staple of a number of superb games, but attempting it in an unwieldy buggy hampered by an erratic camera is like trying to plait snot, and some way removed from fun.

OBLIVION

In its favour, the aerial missions are slightly less restrictive, and overall there is just about enough going on to keep you vaguely interested. Ultimately though, it's all a bit leaden and contrived. No great strategy is required, and it does tend to

feel like you're simply going through the motions.

With the two campaigns offering a total of 25 missions, it may take a while to plough through on the hardest setting, but after a while it offers as much a test of patience as it does gaming prowess. We're trying to be kind here, but while *Stealth Combat* isn't the worst game ever, it's some distance from the best. So, forget about it. **PCZ**



Trying to drive a military vehicle quietly is not an easy task.



Command up to 24 different vehicles.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Variety of vehicles
- ✓ Airborne missions are fun
- ✗ Awkward controls
- ✗ Slow action
- ✗ Unfathomable plot

57

Pedestrian Combat

INPERSPECTIVE

INCOMING FORCES

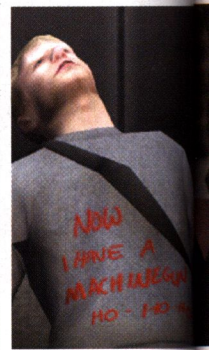
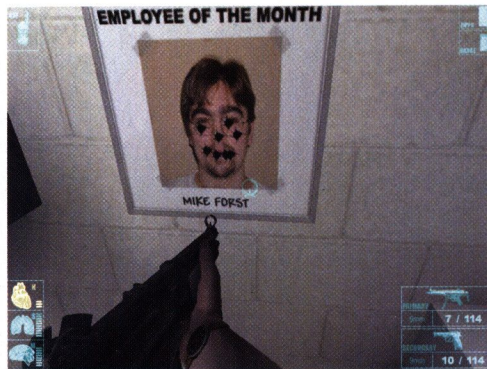
Reviewed Issue 112, 65%

A similar sort of thing, albeit with more of a science fiction slant.

WARGASM

Reviewed Issue 71, 93%

Proper war with tanks and soldiers. None of this fancy futuristic tackle.



Recognisable scenes from the film are mixed with new areas and challenges along with photos on walls, which you can deface.

DIE HARD: NAKATOMI PLAZA

■ £19.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Piranha Games | ETA: May 17 | www.piranha-games.com

REQUIRES PII 400, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** Runs pretty smoothly on this, although a PIII with 128Mb RAM is ideal

Martin Korda strips down to his thermal vest and gets stuck into the FPS recreation of one of the greatest action movies ever

IN THE GRAND scheme of things, *Nakatomi Plaza* really should consider itself lucky that it wasn't born human. Conceived in a heaving moment of misdirected lust in a sweaty garage, it would have grown into an obese, universally ridiculed but deeply intelligent adolescent described as having a "lovely personality" by sycophantic half-friends who actually mean: "they look like they were dropped at birth and let loose in a lard factory."

TELL IT HOW IT IS

So what am I trying to say here? It looks rubbish? Yes. It has hidden depths, which could be missed by the casual, undiscerning onlooker? Definitely. A quick glance around these pages will simply reinforce the former. Go on. Have a look. You know you want to. Closer. There, you see, I told you it looked bad. That's because it's using an early

version of the LithTech engine, which given the fact that *Nakatomi Plaza* is based on one of the greatest action movie licenses ever (one which it not only follows to the letter, but expands upon considerably), is little short of baffling. It's like taking the cream of Hollywood's actors along with a well-woven script, and asking a wet-lipped first year film student to make the film using his dad's handycam. I think you get the idea.

However, like an NHS-bespectacled intellectual with gapped-teeth you could lose a meal in, if you take the time to get to know

it, you'll find yourself becoming absorbed by its fairly substantial, non-aesthetic offerings. Whereas the majority of recent FPSs have gone down a more arcadey route, *Nakatomi Plaza* manages to capture the essence of Hollywood firefights, by melding tense bursts of action with some cleverly scripted set pieces (see panel), during which you must time your attacks perfectly; taking cover, firing, taking cover and more often than not, dying. Even on the easiest level (by no means the choice of slack-jawed simpletons, but actually a stern test for even highly-peppered gun lovers) the

AI shows an uncanny amount of intelligence, throwing over tables for cover, acrobatically diving

behind walls when you enter a room and running away to safety when they've run out of lead. Easy it ain't, although to say it's all good would be a complete bare-faced lie, as at times the enemy simply don't seem to acknowledge your existence.

THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Your 40 (yep count 'em, 40) level romp as dishevelled vest-wearing hero Detective John McClane is made all the more interesting by the inclusion of three personal monitors – health, heart-rate and morale – which directly influence your abilities to waste your sauerkraut chomping adversaries. The first is self explanatory, but it's the other two which add an original twist to the mayhem. Your heart rate goes up every time you exert yourself (run, jump, flush the toilet), and as

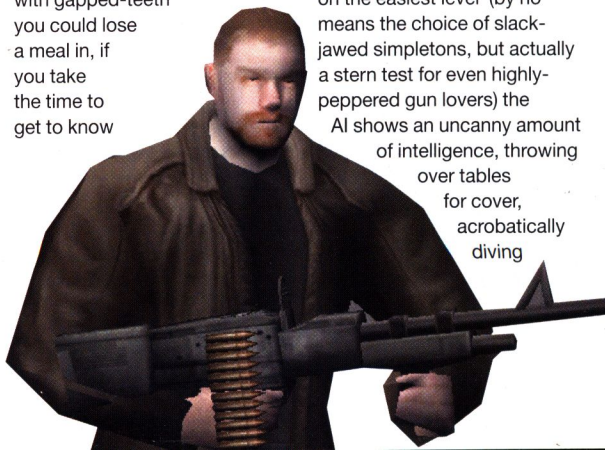
INPERSPECTIVE

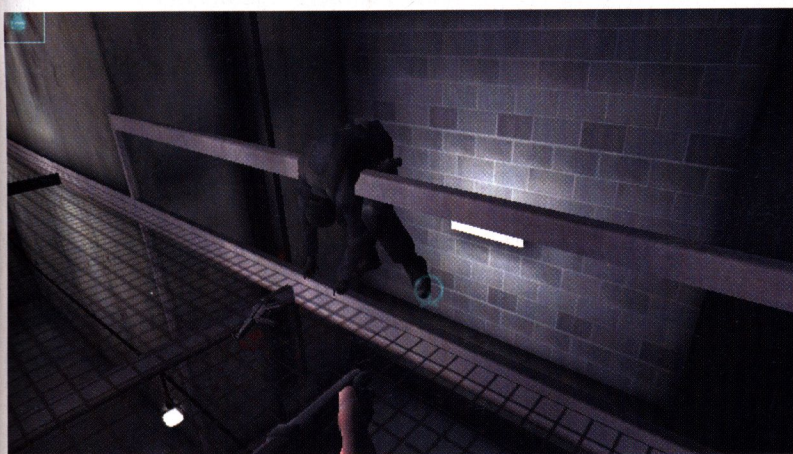
DIE HARD TRILOGY

Reviewed Issue 49, Score 82%
Three varied games involving third-person shooting, driving and point-and-shoot action make up an extremely basic collection.

ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 93%
Another Fox title, but one which oozes polish and atmosphere. If you prefer your shooters more sci-fi, this is by far your best bet.





The key to being a truly great SWAT is having the ability to sleep in hostile terrain.



"It's way past my bedtime."

your respiration level rises in your headphones, so does your inaccuracy with your gun. Morale is based on how well you perform. Offload a clip into a wall instead of an opponent and you'll start believing you're a cack-handed buffoon who couldn't handle a water pistol let alone state of the art weaponry. Perform well, and you'll be wearing

your blood-encrusted vest with pride as your shooting ability soars.

Possibly the game's other great let down is its selection of weaponry. In all there are only four machine guns (including one which doubles as a sniper gun), a pistol and flash bangs, whose effects you'll feel when the enemy start hurling them at you with

admirable accuracy, blinding you totally and blistering your eardrums with a momentary tinnitus-like ringing. There are also a couple of more novel

a near watertight operation, here, you find yourself up against an army. Every floor, while not quite infested, is brimming with enemies, who,

pitiful graphics, a visual monotony which makes the somewhat varied gameplay and well scripted set-pieces tire by about the half way mark.

"What's going to snare most of you is *Nakatomi Plaza's* attempt to totally adhere to the film, and ultimately extend it"

ones such as axes and fire extinguishers, which are vaguely amusing.

YOU AND WHOSE ARMY?

What's going to snare most of you though is *Nakatomi Plaza's* attempt to totally adhere to the film, and ultimately extend it. As well as playing through all the scenes from the film, you'll also find yourself in a series of unfamiliar settings and situations, such as plunging into rat-infested sewers, and avoiding trigger-happy S.W.A.T teams who mistake your barefooted tramp-like appearance for being that of a highly funded and immaculately prepared terrorist (the twats), while conversing with the incompetent law-enforcement agencies outside on your pilfered radio. Whereas the terrorists in *Die Hard* were made up of a small band of well-drilled specialists, running

bleed their cotton little lederhosen, are intent on tracking you down and avenging the deaths of their comrades from the previous levels. Then again, 15-odd terrorists spread over 40-odd floors would have made for a pretty dull game.

The voice acting is surprisingly good given the game's poor presentation, and the garter-wearing officer Powell is played by the same guy as in the film (Reginald VelJohnson). While the cast can safely rip up any overly-hopeful thank you speeches written in a fit of self delusion for the next Oscars awards, they do on the whole manage to replicate the main characters (mainly McClane and chief-terrorist Hans Gruber) fairly convincingly.

Ultimately, though, *Nakatomi Plaza* is an entertaining licensed shooter, which is marred by a pathetically dated engine and

However, it's the hidden pleasures that lurk behind its baseball bat violated face that make *Nakatomi Plaza* well worth a look, especially at this price. It's time to pull a pig off the shelf and realise that what lies within is well worth your attention. Still wouldn't shag it though. **PCZ**

IT'S A SET UP



Pretty it may not be, but it's obvious that plenty of thought has gone into *Nakatomi Plaza's* set pieces, which raise the game well above the confines of an average corridor based shooter. These generally revolve around situations not depicted in the film, such as running around manically looking for some wire cutters to defuse a set of bombs, or trying to usher a *Nakatomi* employee to safety through a blazing inferno. However, possibly the most entertaining of the lot is escorting your overly jovial limo driver Argyle to safety while enemies batter his car with hundred of bullets. Mindless, but fun.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Some intelligent AI
- ✓ True to the film
- ✓ Cheap
- ✗ Ugly
- ✗ Becomes repetitive by about the half-way point
- ✗ Poor selection of weaponry

74

Entertaining but could have tried harder

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seen before...it's the new
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—PC Gamer



SPORTS COMBAT SERVED RAW

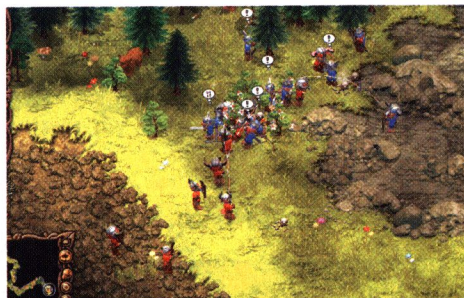


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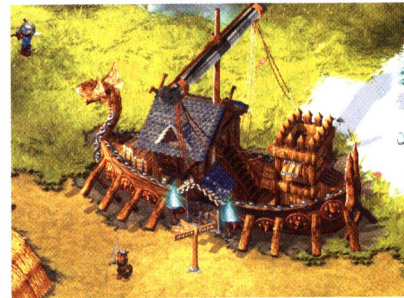




For some reason regular arrows set fire to buildings.



Ah, Paris in the spring...



Strange creatures lurk in the snowy depths.



CULTURES 2: THE GATES OF ASGARD

■ £29.99 | Pub: JoWood | Dev: Funatics | ETA: May 24 | www.cultures2.com

REQUIRES PIII 450, 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 800, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

RTS micromanagement and Vikings? Keith Pullin finds out if it's a winning formula

TO GET anywhere at all in *Cultures 2: The Gates Of Asgard* you need the concentration of a chess grandmaster and the extreme pain threshold of a professional boxer. If you think you have those rare qualities then press on – you may well find something here that interests you. If not, turn the page now and read about something that's worth spending cash on.

VIRTUAL SIMPLETONS

Cultures 2 continues the story of Bjarni the Viking and his efforts to avoid Ragnarok (the end of the world) while establishing thriving Viking settlements and killing or trading with a variety of tribes and races. The game can be played in campaign mode or

a series of stand-alone skirmish levels. Either way you're in for a rough ride.

Like its predecessor, *Cultures 2* possesses one of the most contrived interfaces you're ever

them to go, they either fall asleep or bugger off in the other direction and start picking berries.

The next problem is setting up production chains. Because

"The maps for each level are so massive it takes about ten hours to complete each one"

likely to come across in a strategy game. The first problem is that these Viking imbeciles rarely do what you ask. When you select them and right click on the location where you want

there are so many different goods to produce and so many different buildings to create, it's easy to become hopelessly lost in a sea of resource collection and distribution.

Of course it wouldn't be so bad if your citizens had the sense to find the resources they required, meaning that you have to literally lead them to each one. However, if you love micromanagement in a very literal sense, you'll find yourself in seventh heaven as you take control of even the minutest of details of your thriving society, one which is totally incapable of any worthwhile action without your help. Sadly, though, due to the poor quality of the AI, *Cultures 2* reeks of poor programming and leaves you with an interface that's so cumbersome and infuriating, that the game can often descend into pure farce. To top it all off, the maps for each level are so massive it takes about ten hours to complete each one.

MASOCHIST GAMING

Graphically *Cultures 2* looks like a mid-'90s Amiga game. The characters are blocky and woefully animated, as are the landscapes and the pitiful creatures that live within them. The battles too are unrefined and unsophisticated. They're virtually impossible to direct with any degree of accuracy

due to the random behaviour of your soldiers... And that's not even taking into account the horrendous slowdown that mysteriously appears at the start of every skirmish.

To conclude, *Cultures 2* is the sort of game that will put you off strategy games for life, unless you're severely anal or a complete control freak. Its lack of innovation and hideously dated graphics mean it scores decidedly less than its slightly more accessible predecessor. Honestly, video games are supposed to be fun, and for most of you, *Cultures 2* will prove to be anything but. **PCZ**

INPERSPECTIVE

CULTURES

Reviewed Issue 96, Score 72%

This first game in the series is slightly more accessible and fun than the sequel, but it's also looking decidedly dated now.

SETTLERS IV

Reviewed Issue 101, Score 83%

Good interface and working production chains leave *Settlers IV* as one of the most playable micromanagement RTSs around.



The game's virtually unplayable on the furthest zoom mode.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Quite deep and involving
- ✓ Large maps
- ✗ Totally confusing interface
- ✗ Extremely dull and slow gameplay
- ✗ Poor graphics and atmosphere
- ✗ Terrible AI

45

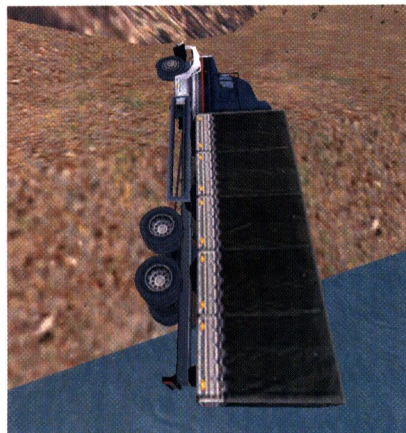
**Incredibly anal and
decidedly dated**

KING OF THE ROAD

■ £29.99 | Pub: JoWood | Dev: SoftLab-Nsk | ETA: June 7

REQUIRES P266, 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card DESIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

Elite in a lorry? A novel but dull idea, as Steve Hill discovers



A lorry has overturned, spilling its load.



Extra cash can be won in organised races.



Caught by the fuzz.

EVER wondered who leaves pornography in lay-bys? You know, those great big fetid piles of *Razzle* and *Fiestas*? Lorry drivers, that's who, unloading the evidence before returning home to the missus. That's the theory anyway, although it's not one given any credence whatsoever by *King Of The Road*, despite its

claims of being a comprehensive lorry driving simulation.

This might sound like the most boring idea ever, but the game does attempt to provide a slightly more glamorous interpretation of life behind the wheel. Competing against rival firms, goods must be transported in the quickest

time and with minimum damage, offering the quandary of whether to flout the law and risk financial castigation, or take your time and get paid a pittance.

In many respects it's as much a business simulator as it is a driving game, as vehicles can be bought and upgraded, and eventually other drivers can be

hired to work for your empire. It's like being Eddie Stobart, but with illicit races and drug smuggling.

Quite a technically accomplished effort, it might not readily qualify as fun, but it is perversely playable in the sense that you feel you have a job to do and so persist despite the mind-numbing effects of mile after mile

of open road. Ultimately though, you are just driving a lorry, and none of us wants that.

PCZONE VERDICT **53**
By no means king of the road

ATROX

■ £29.99 | Pub: Interactive Ideas | Dev: Joymax | ETA: May 24

REQUIRES P166, 64Mb RAM and a 2Mb video card DESIRES PIII 450, 128Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D graphics card

Keith Pullin hoped for a StarCraft clone, but ended up sorely disappointed. Again...

AS THE YEARS

roll on and RTS games become more and more complex it's difficult to know how to approach something as simple and uncomplicated as *Atrax*. On one hand it's refreshing to find a game that's so easy to play. On the other hand you have to ask yourself: is there still room for such total dependence on

basic resource collection and the almost retro concept of 'rush attacks'?

Atrax is strategy gaming at its most undeveloped. All three of the game's races (Hominian, Intelion and Createse) possess little proactive intelligence; to destroy anything you have to right-click a target before units even consider attacking. Even

units wandering straight past an enemy will not fight unless specifically ordered to. And as mentioned, the only way to succeed, regardless of the species you play, is to build the biggest army you can (maximum 250 units) and then steamroller the enemy base.

Graphically the game is a throwback to the days of



Kill, kill, kill - please.

Starcraft with units so minuscule it's a job to tell them apart. The landscapes are about as exciting as a sheet of sandpaper and the base buildings look like they've

been designed by the developer's receptionist during a lunch break in late 1999.

To its credit *Atrax* offers reasonable single and multiplayer options, though in reality it's nothing more than most RTS games already offer. Ultimately when compared with quality sci-fi RTS's such as *Z: Steel Soldiers*, *Atrax* is clearly lacking in every respect. You'll have more fun with a Xerox.

PCZONE VERDICT **37**
Basic and barren



Don't trust anything with multicoloured arms.



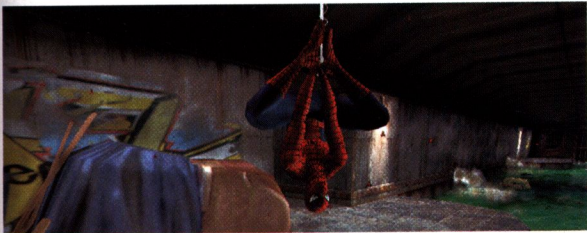
Hominian and proud of it.

SPIDERMAN: THE MOVIE

■ £34.99 | Pub: Activision | ETA: June 7

REQUIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D Card DESIRES PIII 750, 256Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card and a decent joypad

It's official, the movie's great. **James Lyon** sees if the game stacks up



Look, you're supposed to be a spider, not a bat.



The graphics are far better than in the last game.

THOSE WHO played the first *Spider-Man* game will probably have been impressed by its comic book exuberance and irked by its tricky camera and general simplicity. It was a good game but beset by a few niggly problems. So, have they fixed it for this, the unofficial third game in the series? Almost.

For starters, don't even consider buying this if you don't

have an analogue pad with as many buttons as a PS2's. They've made the camera controllable this time, but at the expense of adding more keys, and trying to control everything via a keyboard is just plain impossible. Mouse support is included, thankfully, and a lot of fiddling around with the default keys eventually produces something a little more

comfortable, but it still lacks that console pad precision it was so obviously designed for.

And yet, if you can get past this you can admire a game that complements the movie effectively while improving on its predecessors. Gone, primarily, is the graphical fogging, replaced by a broad view of New York City's streets, which is splayed out before you as you

swing around on a much more manoeuvrable webline. Difficulty levels have also been improved with new fight combos to discover and a points-purchase secret-system to lengthen play.

While it's a great game in theory, it still needs a little bit more tightening in the technical and control departments. Getting past that, though, I still found the wall-crawling action

enjoyable. It's a game that often feels like it's been put together with enthusiasm, and that can only reflect well on the player despite its faults. **PCZ**

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

79

Atmospheric console-type fun



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HOTEL GIANT

■ £29.99 | Pub: JoWood | Dev: Enlight Software | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 350, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card DESIRES A PIII 500 should do the trick

Since a very early age, **Mark Hill** has tried to avoid becoming a hotel manager, and now he realises why



Heading for the hotel bar. Something we know a lot about.



If only you could build the hotel out of *The Shining*.

IT SEEMS gamers the world over are tiring of shooting aliens, saving empires and generally enjoying themselves. What they really want is to be factory managers, airport builders and company chairmen. Or so the endless stream of *Tycoon*-style game publishers would have us believe. Why go through the boredom of clawing

your way through the soulless capitalist ladder in the real world when you can be just as bored on a computer?

Well, here's a news flash: building theme parks is fun, building hotels isn't. Although *Hotel Giant* is going for more depth than the standard industry sim by stealing as much as it can from *The Sims*, it will still drive

any right-thinking individual to despair. Which is quite apt, since that is what hotels usually do.

To become this fabled *Giant*, you must complete a set of scenarios where you decorate, renovate and design every aspect of your hotel and keep the customers happy. This is all done through a pretty awful engine that lets you switch from

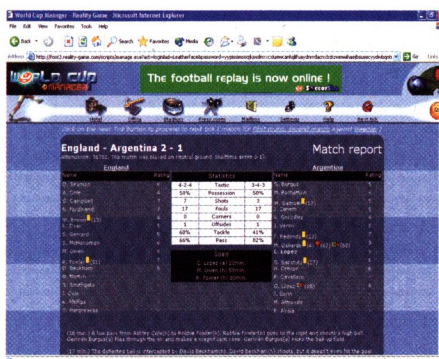
the traditional isometric view to a first-person camera, making the whole thing even more of a voyeur simulator than usual. Not that the people here ever do anything interesting. Don't expect to emulate William Baldwin in the equally dire film *Sliver*. You won't find Sharon Stone fiddling with herself in any of your hotel's bathtubs.

What you will find though, is a dreadful interface and a dull, pointless experience.

PCZONE VERDICT **39**
I've stayed in better sewers, and had more fun

WORLD CUP MANAGER

■ 7.5 Euros (approx £4.60) for 5 games from www.reality-game.com | Pub: RealityGame | ETA: Out Now



The stats are not perfect but they're better than most.

IT'S A LONG time since the whole office was addicted to the beta version of the best web-based footie management sim around, but with the biggest sporting event of the decade so far just around the corner, the World Cup version of *SoccerSim* deserves a proper look. And with much better presentation

and a proper *Champ Man*-style match engine, this version of *SoccerSim* really is better than ever. The World Cup game has the advantage of being much quicker and not letting you waste days searching the transfer market for non-existent stars willing to join a third division team. It's much harder to find a

game to play against a full complement of human managers though, and you may well have to settle for a single-player game. But for such a low price, you can afford to give it a go. You may just find yourself totally addicted.

PCZONE VERDICT **75**

MONSTERVILLE

■ £24.99 | Pub: Mindscape | ETA: May 24



It makes the modern version of *The Munsters* look good.

AS BIZARRE game concepts go, this takes some monster from the old Universal Studios films – Frankenstein, Dracula, Quasimodo and so on – and try to win an election by taking control of buildings and frightening the locals. Well, that's the theory anyway. In practice what you have here is a horrible mess of garish colours and incomprehensible gameplay, where you spend most of your time watching your monster

waving his hands at a house to win it over and then watch an opponent take it back. The tactics come into play by building things other monsters are afraid of, like crucifixes and churches for Dracula, but the whole 'zany' feel and sheer design incompetence fill you with a horror those black and white movies could only dream of producing. (MH)

PCZONE VERDICT **12**

JERUSALEM

■ £29.99 | Pub: Mindscape | Dev: Arxel Tribe | ETA: Out May 24

REQUIRES P200, 32Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card DESIRES PII 450, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card

Mark Hill trawls through yet another substandard adventure game



There's nothing more embarrassing than a tourist with a map.

THERE'S ONLY

one thing we hate more than bad games, and that's bad educational games. Which is exactly what *Jerusalem* is. Apparently part of the Adrian Blake Trilogy, a Scottish explorer who travels through time and lives adventures that just happen to teach you a bit of history along the way, *Jerusalem* sees

him waking up next to the gates of the Holy City. From there it's a trip to the Wailing Walls and other sites of historical interest. Basically, it's like an interactive Religious Studies lesson, where you learn about Jesus, Mohammed and the Ottoman Empire. *Jerusalem* is played as a succession of cut-scenes, linked by a *Myst*-style first-

person interface and the same sort of rubbish puzzles that make up this sort of game. There's even a love story thrown in there, linked to Blake's previous adventure in *Pompeii*. In its favour is that the acting is a cut above average and the cut-scenes don't look too shabby. But its intention isn't so much to entertain as it is



"Look at me, I'm wearing an historically accurate gown."

to instruct people in the three religions and cultures that co-existed in the city during the 16th century, and I for one would much rather read a book on the subject if that's what I wanted to do. It may have been developed with the help of French museums, institutes and some bloke who wrote a dictionary of religions, but that

doesn't make it something worth playing. Especially when the technology is closer to the 16th century's than this one.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

32

**Very dull but
educational**



As if the game wasn't bad enough, bugs mean you get stuck in certain levels.

PAC-MAN ALL-STARS

■ £9.99 | Pub: Infogrames | ETA: Out Now

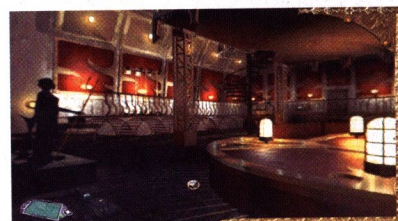
I REMEMBER Pac-Man. I also remember Ms Pac-Man and Jr Pac-Man, but for the life of me I can't recall a game featuring Prof Pac-Man, although apparently it was a general knowledge 'hit' back in 1983. If that doesn't sound sacrilegious enough then how about a 'game' that puts all four of these characters together, takes one of the central tenets of *Pac-Man*,

'eating pills', does away with the other, the maze, and wraps it up in a shell that I wouldn't blow if I found it on a desert island. It's quite an achievement to take a game from 22 years ago and make it worse, but that's what Infogrames has done here. Abysmal. (DW)

PCZONE VERDICT 13

THE SECRET OF NAUTILUS

■ £29.99 | Pub: Mindscape | ETA: Out May 17



Can you believe they still make games like this?



NO MATTER how much we rubbish them, *Myst* games keep on hopping the channel from France, where it seems developers still think gaming should consist of a slideshow of empty drawings and functional puzzles. This time you get to explore the *Nautilus* –

Captain Nemo's submarine from Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*. And what a dire exploration it is. At least the *Myst* games have a pretty pastoral world to explore. Here you just get a succession of brown corridors and rooms, where you open doors and navigate with

what is still, for all its simplicity, one of the worst interfaces ever. Moving your mouse onto every pixel just to see if there's something you can interact with is not our idea of fun. Muck. (MH)

PCZONE VERDICT 18

PC CD-ROM

6543209

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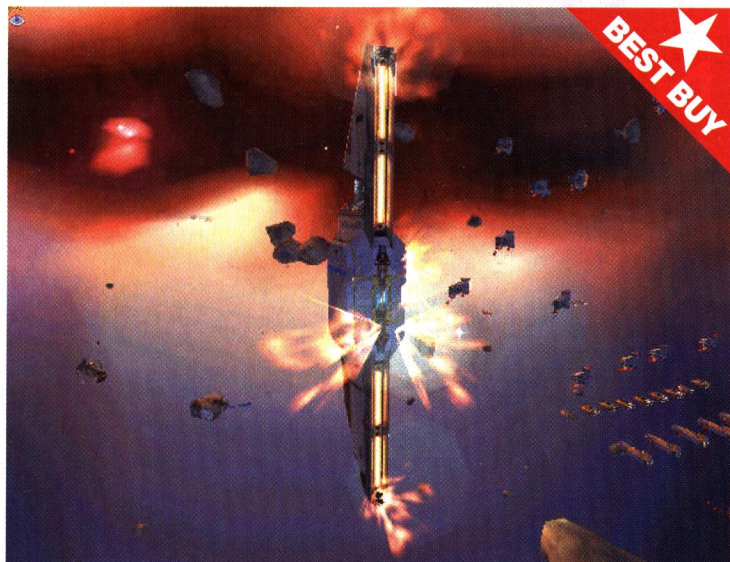
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It may look confusing, but once you get the hang of it, it's stunning.

HOMEWORLD

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

ALONG WITH *Total Annihilation*, *Homeworld* will go down as one of the most underrated strategy games of all time. There are still a great many developers who remain unconvinced that a fully 3D, real-time strategy game can be user-friendly and yet evidence to the contrary has been under their very noses for years. *Homeworld* was and still is superb, and to ask a fiver for it is as big a bargain as you will ever find.

Of course it all takes some getting used to, about 30 minutes should do. The excellent tutorial gently guides you through the interface and perfectly sets the pace for what's to come; which soon unfolds into an epic struggle through

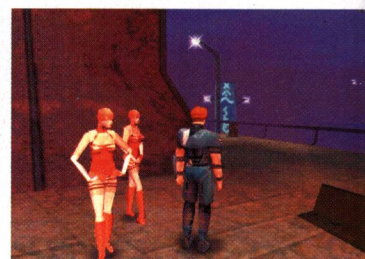
space, as you research new ships and send them to crush the enemy.

While the *Cataclysm* sequel refined the interface and buffed up the graphics, *Homeworld* has managed to retain its beauty. Once the single-player game is completed, there's plenty of life in the skirmish games, but most of all, *Homeworld* has a thriving mod community, and if we haven't convinced you to invest in this classic game yet, be aware that somewhere out there are mods for *Star Trek*, *Babylon 5* and *Star Wars*. Well, what are you waiting for?

Richie Shoemaker

PCZONE VERDICT

90



Some of you might think it's too pretentious for its own good. You'd be wrong.

THE NOMAD SOUL

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

ALTHOUGH more famous for the fact that you can find a digitised David Bowie in full Thai ladyboy mode dancing in one of the many bars that make up its gameworld, *The Nomad Soul* is also a damn good game. It's one of the most ambitious titles we've ever come across, with an epic sci-fi storyline, a massive world full of detail to explore and a combination of genres. It's an adventure, it's a first-person shooter, it's a beat 'em up and it's totally engrossing.

On top of all this, it's also a game intended solely for adults. You get to bed your girlfriend in the first few minutes and you visit sex shops and whore-houses every step of the way. It may be dangerously sexist, but it's such a breath

of fresh air to be treated like an adult, that it doesn't really matter.

You, the game-player, are transported into a parallel universe where you control the body of a policeman who's just been murdered. Your job is to solve this crime and uncover the conspiracy behind it. The city is so big and rich in detail, it's a joy just to wander round and explore. Plus there are loads of characters to talk to, objects to pick up and puzzles to solve, plus plenty of sub-games to keep things as diverse as possible.

As with most original and ambitious games, you either love it or hate it, but it's an absolute must for a fiver.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

84

DAIKATANA

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now



John Romero patiently waits for a challenger online.

THERE'S A brilliant feature on our website that lets you track the number of players playing a particular game online. Dominated by *Half-Life*, the amusing stuff is down the bottom where you can find the bargain-bin tat battling it out for the title of 'least played online game'. At the time of this review *Daikatana* was marginally ahead of *Deer Hunter*, although strangely it was registering just one person as being online.

I went back the next day and there was still one person roaming around trying to find someone to play. And then it hit me. After *Daikatana* was played alive by the gaming press John Romero refused to accept the verdict, claiming that the game was, in fact, brilliant. What are

the chances that he's still out there now, eyes fixed on his server list like a spider waiting to trap an unsuspecting fly, in a last-ditch bid to clear his name and prove to the world that *Daikatana* is actually a misunderstood gem from a maligned genius.

It's not, of course, but neither is it the worst game ever. I reviewed the game first time round and stand by my score of 53 per cent. If nothing else, at this price it gives you the opportunity to see what might have been. A chance to see where it all went wrong for one of the most hyped, delayed and ultimately flawed shooters in history.

Dave Woods

PCZONE VERDICT

53

MASTER RALLYE URBAN CHAOS

■ £9.99 | Pub: Microids | ETA: Out Now



Paris to Moscow in as little time as possible.

WITH THE PC drowning in a flood of rally games, this was never going to provide a genuine challenge to the dominance of *Colin McRae*. In fairness, it wasn't trying to though, and offered an alternative take on off-road shenanigans, recreating a little known cross-country event that takes place between Paris and Moscow.

There's no place here for your Ford Focus or Peugeot 206, with stages instead contested by glorified tractors capable of lasting the distance over some challenging terrain. Clearly you don't have to attempt the entire 5,000 kilometres, and a number of different modes offer a reasonable amount of

variety. Straying from the beaten track is a common occurrence, and it's often a case of finding your way to the next checkpoint by any means necessary. The handling is fairly robust and it's playable enough to have you slapping the keyboard for more, particularly in the tightly balanced arcade style checkpoint mode.

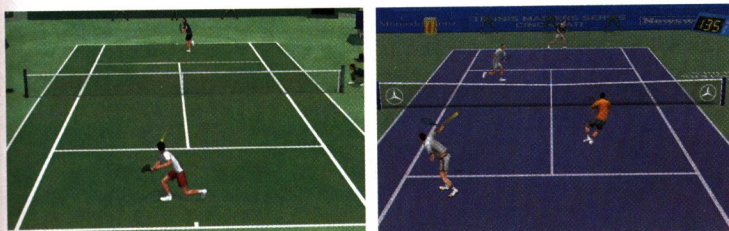
As predicted, *Master Rallye* disappeared without a trace upon its initial release, and has swiftly found its way into the bargain basement. But at this price, you can't really go wrong.

Steve Hill

PCZONE VERDICT 70

TENNIS MASTERS SERIES

■ £9.99 | Pub: Microids | ETA: Out Now



If you're looking for a realistic tennis game, you won't do better than this.

PERHAPS IT WAS the Christmas release, a time when we were all gorging ourselves on stuffed meat, slothfully sitting in front of Yule-tide shmaltz on the box, while expanding sufficiently to wedge ourselves into our armchairs until well into the new year, without ever giving a passing thought to summer pastimes. Or perhaps it was the relative lack of popularity of tennis games on the PC. Whatever the reason, though, this superb tennis sim has fallen from the grace of the full-price shelves and into the depths of the bargain bucket in less than five months. Which is good for you if you don't already own it, as it's quite

simply the most realistic PC tennis simulation to date. While it may lack the sheer entertainment value of *Virtua Tennis*, its spot on physics, superbly challenging AI and solid presentation make it a must buy for any sports fan. Sadly, there are no grass courts due to the restrictions of the *Tennis Masters* licence, but apart from this and the odd quirk, there's little to criticise. Quality sports games are a rarity, so just make sure you don't pass this one by before it disappears from the bargain bins too.

Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT 83

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now



Easy to play but a bit too repetitive for our liking.

A VERY SIMPLE and rather average cross between *GTA III* and *Oni*, *Urban Chaos* offers you a large city to explore Lara Croft-style, and a whole lot of criminals to beat to a pulp. You can get into cars and drive around smashing pedestrians or, if you want to play it properly, try to get to your police missions on time. It's all pretty simplistic and not a little repetitive, but the full variety of beat 'em up moves and *Tomb Raider* acrobatics coupled with car chases and an atmospheric city full of falling leaves

and rainy puddles makes it passable entertainment for a while. And it doesn't look half bad either. Developer Mucky Foot – more recently responsible for *Startopia* – does a decent job of combining all the elements into a entertaining package, but it's not one that will keep your interest very long, especially when you consider how plain *GTA III* makes it look now.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT 65

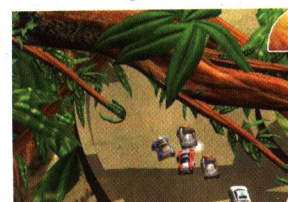
LEFTOVERS

▲ **Pathetic.** That's the only word that can do justice to what's left in this month's round up. In fact, I'm almost tempted to leave it at that. But I won't. Sadly. So, where to begin? How about *Excessive Speed* (Sold Out, £4.99), a pitiful top-down hash-up of a racing game where it's virtually impossible to discern which of the minuscule rectangles posing as cars you're supposed to be driving. If you do manage to work out which one's yours then the 14 reversible tracks and myriad of power-ups will keep you vaguely entertained for a weekend. But only just (40 per cent). Thought that was bad? Well, how about this one, *Akimbo: Kung-Fu Hero* (Sold Out, £4.99)? Frankly, it's staggering how this one got to see the light of day. You guide a twee little man through a set of dull sideways scrolling platform-based missions while battling the urge to spit out exclamations of hatred at its dated graphics, archaic design and general lack of fun. Things are made even worse when you realise it was originally released a little under a year ago. Poor (18 per cent). If you're not content with these mediocrities, then how about the two compilations both entitled *Sim 3 Pack*, from Dice Multimedia? Both retailing at a meagre £4.99, the first one offers *Sim Earth* (minimum spec a 12Mhz 286, need I say more?), *Sim Farm* (growing wheat has never been so dull) and *Sim Safari* (for monkeys), while the second one is just as dull and dated, offering *Sim Ant*, *Town and Life*. Forget it (18 per cent each). Finally, there's the *Ultimate Speed Challenge* compilation (Dice Multimedia, £4.99). Perhaps it's their relation to the other two Dice offerings, or perhaps it's that of the three games on offer (*Andretti Racing*, *NASCAR Road Racing* and *NASCAR Revolution*), none require more grunt than a P200. Quite frankly, it's just another collection for the pathetically nostalgic, who spend their days whining how great games used to be back in the day. Games that run on early Pentiums stopped being fun five years ago. Deal with it (17 per cent).

Martin Korda



Akimbo: Kung-Fu Hero



Excessive Speed



Sim Farm

UPDATES

A place for single-player redemption and multiplayer action

MULTIPLE CHANCES

What's all this about then?

Some PC games are exceptionally flaky on release, with bugs and omissions that are subsequently fixed over time with patches. When this happens we'll take another look and see if the score is worth upping. By the same token, massively multiplayer games are ever-evolving and because of this we'll be revisiting major releases to see what's changed over time. This is also the place where we take a proper look at the multiplayer side of games. As we regularly review games before they go on sale, often there are no public servers up and running, so instead of telling you how we think the game is going to play we'll wait and do a proper multiplayer review here, outlining how many servers are up and how the game plays online.



DUNGEON SIEGE MULTIPLAYER

■ £34.99 | Pub: Microsoft | Dev: Gas Powered Games | ETA: Out Now | www.dungeonsiege.com | Players: 2-8

REQUIRES PIII 333, 128Mb RAM, 4Mb 3D card and a 56K modem **DESIRES** Little or no lag online with this game so these specs are fine

One of the greatest RPG's of recent times is currently attracting interest in the online community. Chris Anderson joins in the fun

BEAR ONE thing in mind from the outset, *Dungeon Siege* and the world it is set in was always designed for single-player gameplay, so any multiplayer additions were always going to be thrown in as an extra, as opposed to a separate gaming experience. This is evident as soon as you go to the Microsoft servers and discover people who all want to start in different parts of the gameworld and go off exploring on their own, instead of starting together in one place and working as a team. For this reason the whole thing is usually a confusing affair, and because people often start the game in totally different

locations, they end up not seeing each other most of the time.

The nature of *Dungeon Siege*'s frenetic constant-action gameplay also dictates that people hardly talk to each other while they're playing, giving you the feeling you're on the server on your own, rather than having other real players in your party fighting alongside you. It's not a world-changing experience, needless to say, and most people lose interest very quickly and log off to go back to the single-player game.

The only real advantage I can see to *Dungeon Siege* multiplayer is having the ability to start the game from scratch and play it co-operatively all the



No time for chat, there's too much going on.

way through with people you already know. As a 'pick up and play' online experience, it's a shallow one and there are much better ways to spend your online gaming time. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 114)	89
MULTIPLAYER SCORE	50
A real let down	

SERIOUS SAM: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER MULTIPLAYER

■ £19.99 | Pub: Take 2 | Dev: Croteam | ETA: Out Now | www.serioussam.com | Players: 2-16

REQUIRES PIII 300, 64Mb RAM, 4Mb 3D card and a 56K modem **DESIRES** PIII 600, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and an ADSL connection

Sam gets serious online. Mark Hill plays it how it was meant to be played

I WAS NEVER a big fan of either of the *Serious Sam* games in single-player. The relentless assault of enemies rushing towards you, the lack of subtlety, the fact that you get even the most powerful weapons

within minutes of starting; it's all a million miles away from where I want my solo experiences to be. But quite close to where I want them in multiplayer.

Serious Sam is an excellent engine in search of a proper

game, but online all you need is an engine and a bunch of people. And this is exactly where this game shines.

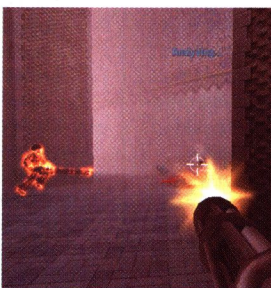
Counter-Strike and their ilk are all very well, but when you want to relieve some stress with instantaneous, non-stop action this is perfect. It might lack the skill test that is *Quake III* and its derivatives, but nothing comes close to *Serious Sam* for sheer adrenaline-pumping violence.

The touch of genius though, the thing that makes *Serious Sam* great, is the co-operative mode, where you can team up with up to 11 other people to tackle the single-player maps. You have unlimited lives and an

almost inexhaustible supply of ammo, and it's an absolute riot. There are plenty of servers offering this option, although they are more laggy than deathmatch games, probably because of the vast number of enemies and gibbs covering the screen. If you're serious about action, you'll need a fast connection, so throw those 56K modems out of the window. Don't say we didn't warn ya. **PCZ**



You can't beat the pure carnage of a co-op game.



PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 112)	83
MULTIPLAYER SCORE	85
It all makes sense now	

STAR TREK: BRIDGE COMMANDER MULTIPLAYER

■ £34.99 | Pub: Activision | Dev: Totally Games | ETA: Out Now | www.bridgecommander.com | Players: 2-8

REQUIRES PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card and a 28.8K modem DESIRES PIII 450, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and an ADSL connection

There are Klingons on the starboard bow, **Richie Shoemaker** boldly plays *Bridge Commander* online

DESPITE only having a hundred or so regular online players, *Bridge Commander* is a game best played against a handful of opponents. Perhaps it's just as well, for although

there is a mod that allows up to 16 people to fight it out across the emptiness of deep space, whether you want to or not, eight is the maximum and four the average – hardly what you might

call all-out war. However, for a quick scrap, *Bridge Commander* is no less entertaining for it.

Unfortunately finding a 'clean' game is something of a chore. Most servers are running mods, scripts or in some cases cheats and require you to download extra files, which is fine in the short term, but could mean you getting kicked out if you try joining another server which isn't running them. Some people get around this by installing two versions of the game; one where they allow extra downloads, another where they don't, but this doesn't get around the fact that *Bridge Commander* players have been left to their own devices and it's a community that could do with some policing.

That said, *Bridge Commander* online is just as good in combat as the single-player game. The interface and controls are identical and the thrill of destroying a real opponent much more satisfying (although be prepared for accusations of cheating if you win). Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Federation Vs Non Feds and Defend The Starbase are the four online modes and they're all a lot of fun. One minor quibble is that it's not uncommon to play against the same vessels time after time, which is fair enough as everyone wants to win so it helps to use the best ships on offer, but it's something the developers could have easily avoided by offering more mission objectives or

limiting the numbers of a particular ship in a game.

More than most, *Bridge Commander* is a game best played against those you know and trust. As with *Counter-Strike* it's far too easy for cheats to prosper, unfortunately *Bridge Commander* doesn't have the numbers to sustain itself if those who want to play fair are turned away. Our advice is to play on a LAN, it's easier, faster and much, much safer. **PW**



Take that you big brute, you.

PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 114)	83
MULTIPLAYER SCORE	67
Call out the space police	

C&C: RENEGADE MULTIPLAYER V1.03

■ £29.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: Westwood | ETA: Out Now | www.westwood.com | Players: 2-32

REQUIRES PII 400, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card and a 56K modem DESIRES PIII 600, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and an ADSL connection

Research completed... building... unit ready... After the release of its first major multiplayer patch, **Richie Shoemaker** wonders if *C&C: Renegade* is ready to take off online

PATCHED



While there have been a few minor updates, it is the new aircraft that most have been looking forward to.

IT WAS ONLY last month we took a more detailed look at *Renegade*'s online game, and since then it has received a rather significant update in the form of the 1.03 patch. In it, along with a few bug fixes and support for third-party mods, are two new maps, across which players can now take to the sky.

Big deal? Well in some ways, yes. Some of you may recall that originally aircraft were meant to be in the game, but they were

removed 'for the sake of gameplay' a few months before release. Despite the panning the game has received since, it is with some thanks that Westwood has stuck by its fans and continued to update and upgrade what is an enjoyable multiplayer game – lesser developers might not have bothered.

There are in fact three aircraft to choose from: the NOD assault helicopter; the GDI Orca and the transport chopper, which is

identical whichever side you fly for. Like the ground vehicles they're pretty sluggish to control and although they use the same keys as all the other vehicles, strafing and altitude controls are somewhat inconvenient. Despite – or rather because of this – the aircraft are far from overpowering and complement the fast-paced nature of *Renegade*'s arcade-style combat. However, the two maps aren't so special: the first a dusky urban figure-of-eight map,

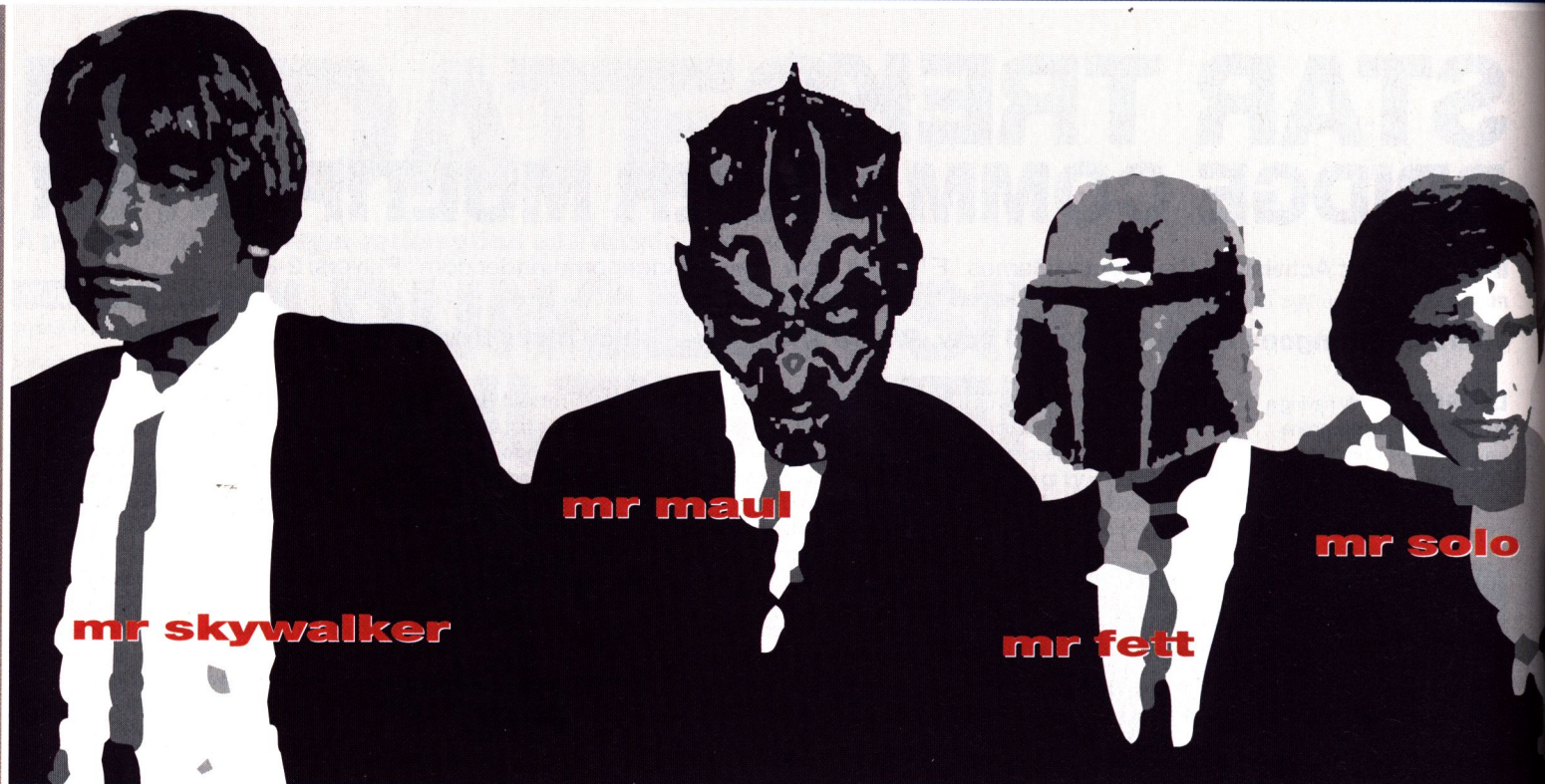
the second a rather basic desert scenario, though it won't be long before some quality maps appear, if they haven't already.

While it may be stretching it to say this patch turns *Renegade* into a must-have game, it certainly improves its already broad online appeal. While the single-player game is beyond help, the multiplayer game is gaining momentum. If Westwood can see its way to including real-time base-building

we may finally have cause for celebration. But for now Westwood deserves no more than a pat on the back. **PW**

PCZONE VERDICT

ORIGINAL MULTIPLAYER SCORE (ISSUE 116)	79
PATCHED SCORE	80
Getting better slowly but surely	



STAR WARS SUPERTEST

The **ZONE** team succumbed to the dark side ages ago, so they're not about to go soft on the biggest licence in the world. **Mark Hill** picks up the pieces

THE CONTENDERS

X-WING ALLIANCE
ISSUE 77 – 88%



FORCE COMMANDER
ISSUE 89 – 81%



GALACTIC BATTLEGROUNDS
ISSUE 109 – 84%



STARFIGHTER
ISSUE 114 – 65%



JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST
ISSUE 115 – 91%



THE JURY

RICHIE SHOEMAKER



ANTHONY HOLDEN



MARK HILL



KEITH PULLIN



STEVE HILL



STILL FEELING THE FORCE

We all love the original *Star Wars* trilogy to bits. It's part of who we are, part of our mythology and part of our consciousness. But what about the countless games it's spawned? We take a look at the most recent and discuss just how well they capture the feeling of the films.

Mark: Are we seeing a renaissance of *Star Wars* games, or have they always been bad, and are they still bad?

Richie: LucasArts games always used to be great.

Steve: But it's not a guarantee of quality any more.

Mark: It wasn't just its *Star Wars* games. You had all the great adventure games too. That was the golden era. Now everything is third-party.

Richie: The games that are coming up are brilliant though. *Galaxies* is the best game I've ever seen.

Mark: And *Knights Of The Old Republic* looks really nice too. But let's take a look at the current crop.

X-WING ALLIANCE

Mark: The problem with this one is that the first five or six missions, the first three hours or so, are incredibly slow and dull. You spend ages just inspecting cargo and stuff.

Richie: That is very dull.

Mark: And then something goes wrong and you have to start all over again.

Richie: It weaves the story of the films with its own plot quite well though.

Mark: And it does get much better later on.

Richie: Yeah, you even get to fly the Millennium Falcon into the Death Star. It's looking quite old now, but I've been playing it with the new third-party upgrade that's been released online, and it looks OK.

Mark: It's quite a hardcore sim in some respects. You have loads of keys to learn and it can get really hard. Although you can make yourself invincible with one of the options to make it more arcadey.

Steve: That's just cheating.

Anthony: It's got a good story, camp robots and some nice ship designs, like the Corellian transports at the beginning.

Mark: The problem with those is

that they don't really feel any different from smaller, faster ships like the X-Wings. But, like most *Star Wars* games, one of the best things about it is the sound. The lasers and especially the sound of Tie Fighters swooshing by.

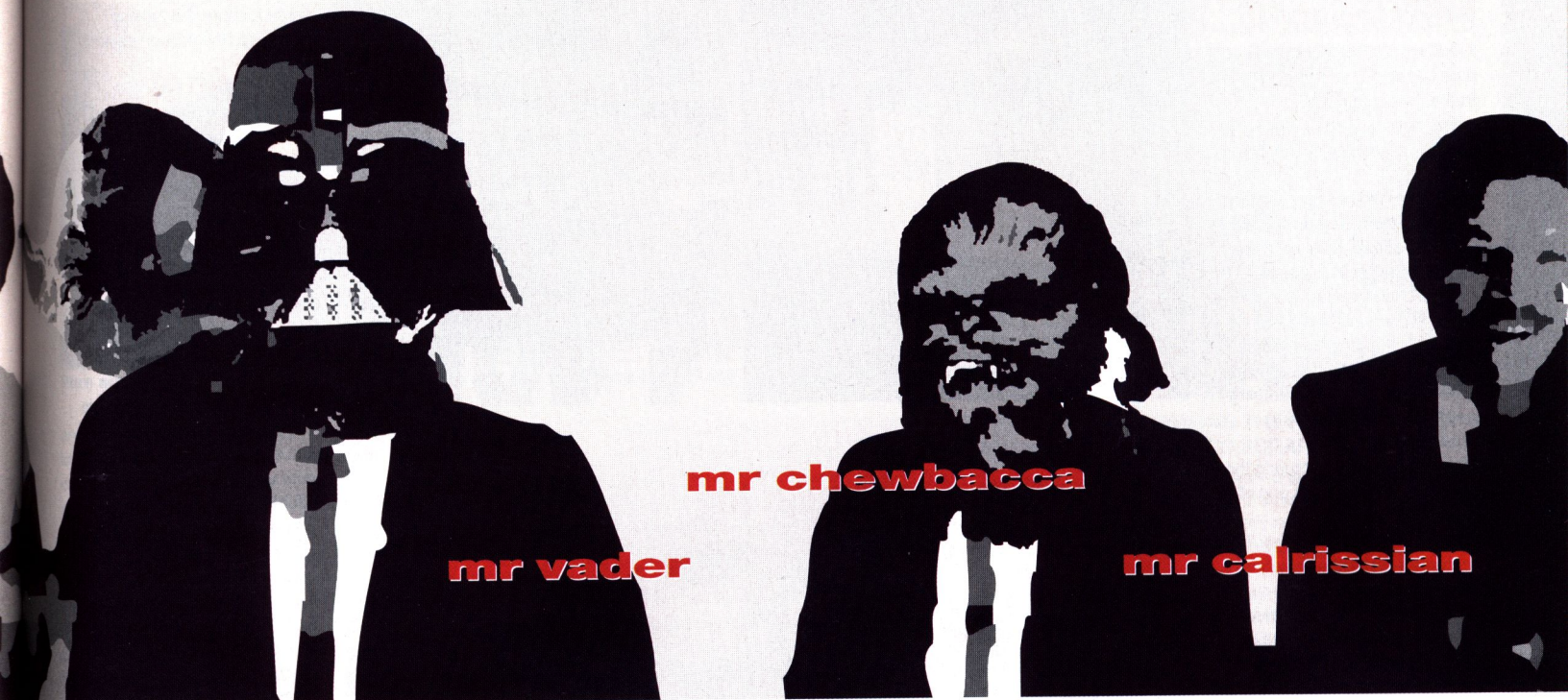
Richie: You can't beat that. But do you reckon it's better than the old ones?

Mark: No way. *Tie Fighter* is still the best, even if it is really old. It's darker, grittier and feels just right. You get Darth Vader sending you on missions and later on you have Imperial spies giving you bonus objectives during missions which uncover a whole web of intrigue. Brilliant.

Keith: *Alliance* doesn't really stand out as being a great *Star Wars* game.

Mark: But for me, these space sims are the ones that make you feel most like you're in the films. The total immersion of the space battles, all the ships...

Keith: But it's limited. You don't



get to go down to planets, fight AT-ATs and all that. There's only one game here that offers all that – *Battlegrounds*.

Mark: We'll get to that later.

Steve: *Alliance* is too much like hard work. It requires too much commitment to get into it. When you watch the film it all kicks off within ten minutes, you don't have to spend six hours watching cargo ships being inspected.

big blue cubes when you select units?

Mark: And have you seen the size of the thighs on the stormtroopers?

Richie: But it had quite a good story, I thought.

Mark: Yep, the story is one of the best of any of the *Star Wars* games.

Richie: You start off as a stormtrooper and eventually turn

"I only played it because I had to. I will never touch it again"

KEITH ON JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

Keith: None of it is better than the original *Star Wars* arcade game, with the vector graphics. You could destroy the Death Star in that too.

Richie: That was just genius. But every *Star Wars* game should have AT-ATs.

Anthony: What you want in that case is *Rogue Squadron*. That's still the best.

FORCE COMMANDER

Steve: What a mess. The camera is just bollocks.

Mark: The camera control is one of the worst ever in any game. It makes it almost unplayable.

Steve: It was so tortuous. I spent ages getting through the first mission, and then I just thought: "I'm not going through that again."

Mark: And the graphics are absolutely atrocious.

Steve: What's with those stupid

to the light side.

Steve: But what's the point of a good story if the game is rubbish? And then there's that rock version of the *Star Wars* theme tune in the menu.

Mark: I quite liked that. *Force Commander* does get better if you can stick with it. In later missions you get to control massive AT-ATs and Tie Fighters.

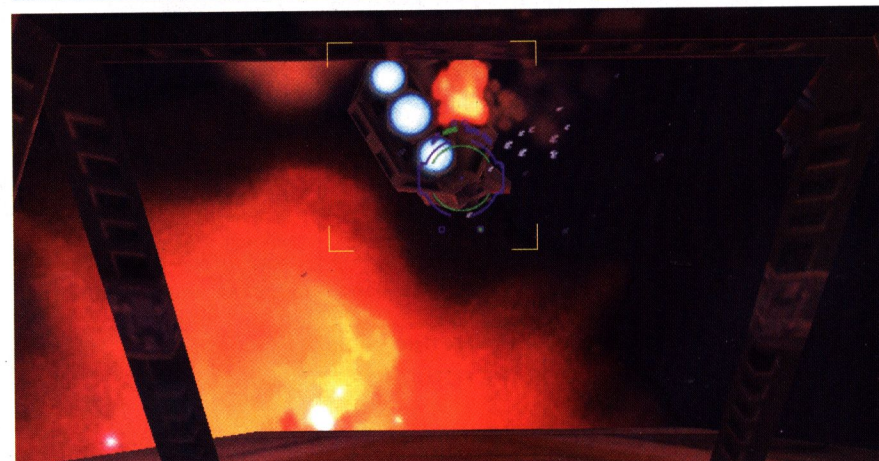
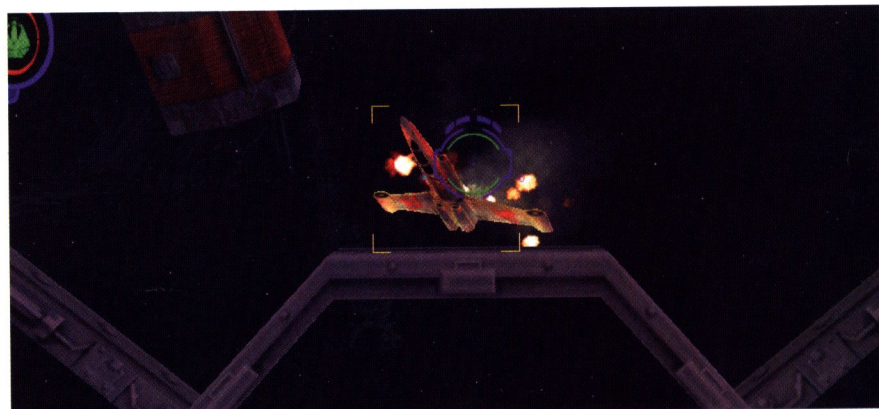
Richie: But they don't feel right.

Mark: That's just because it looks so terrible. The development was a mess. They worked on one engine for ages, which looked awful, then they scrapped it and spent another

year redoing it and came up with another rubbish engine.

Richie: I think it's probably the worst *Star Wars* game that I've ever played.

Keith: If they'd sorted the camera out maybe it would be slightly playable.



If you can get through the first few dull hours of *Alliance*, you'll find a great game.

Mark: It had no resource management which was a plus for me.

Richie: You just want it to be turn-based and 2D.

Mark: Damn right. I'll tell you which is the best *Star Wars* strategy. *Supremacy*. (Everyone

heckles). OK, it was rubbish, but it did a better job of recreating the atmosphere. But *Force Commander* does have some good bits. The Battle Of Hoth mission isn't bad. You have loads of AT-ATs and it's better than Hoth in *Battlegrounds*.

Steve: You play as the Empire, which is interesting.

Richie: But you switch sides later on.

Steve: I felt quite guilty smashing up Alec Guinness' house in that first mission. That's just wrong.

GALACTIC BATTLEFIELDS

Keith: I think it's probably the best one here.

Steve: I thought it was embarrassing. Darth Vader lashing away at trees. That's not right.

Mark: They're like Lego versions of the real thing. You do actually get scenes from the films in the intro and then stills in the pre-mission briefings, but once you're in the game the illusion is shattered. For me the resource management took away any *Star Wars* feeling. There's something very wrong about watching wookies fishing.

Richie: In terms of capturing the *Star Wars* feel I think it's one of the worst.

Keith: I disagree completely. It captures it perfectly. There's no other game that has as many units from the film. Pretty much every character is in there. It hasn't missed anything out at all.

Mark: But what's the point of that if they don't feel right? Luke Skywalker is just this matchstick waving a lightsaber around.

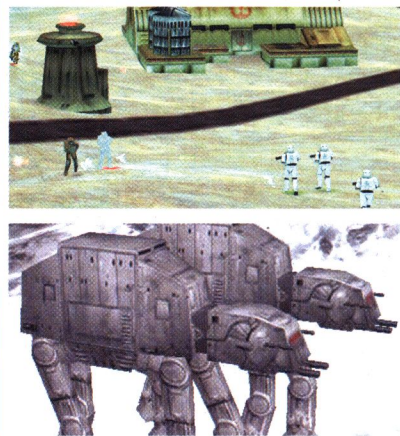
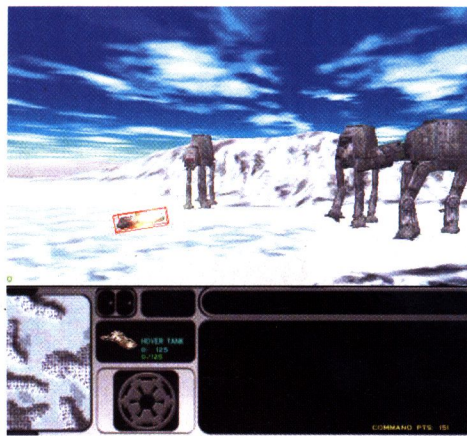
Steve: It is completely Lego.

Richie: But that's not a bad thing. *Star Wars* Lego is great.

Mark: But if *Age Of Empires* is considered one of the best strategy games ever and this is basically a *Star Wars* version, surely it's got to be great?

Keith: Anybody who's into *Age Of Empires* and likes *Star Wars* will love this.

Richie: Yeah, it's alright. It's a



The embarrassing *Force Commander* is best buried and forgotten.

solid little game. But let's be honest. Did you play the Naboo campaigns?

Keith: Yeah, I played it all.

Mark: There are plenty of campaigns and you can just play

the ones you want. You can disregard the rubbishy *Episode I* stuff and just play the Darth Vader or Princess Leia missions.

Keith: And you can get to see loads of Gungans dying horribly,

which is always worthwhile. Just watching them explode in a heap and writhe in agony will make a lot of people happy, I'm sure. And then you get a *Star Wars* encyclopaedia, which gives you information on anything you could possibly want to know about.

Mark: Which isn't bad considering you can buy one of those separately for 30 quid.

Keith: Well, with this one you get a game free. I love strategy games and this is a really good one. The best *Star Wars* strategy



Battlefields has all the units and characters, but it still doesn't feel quite right.

game for sure. I'm looking forward to the add-on pack.

STARFIGHTER

Keith: I spent ages just bouncing from canyon to canyon. It has a brilliant atmosphere, but the gameplay is just too simplistic.

Steve: It's just a weekend game.

Mark: Basically, it's a *Rogue Squadron* type of game, isn't it?

Steve: It looks great, though.

Keith: It reminded me a bit of *Starfox* on Nintendo. With your wingmen and all that.

Mark: The space missions are like first-person *Asteroids*. It's just a case of shooting things over and over.

Richie: Considering it's based on *Episode I*, it does a really good job. It captures that film quite well.

Mark: But it does suffer from that. You don't get that *Star Wars* thrill playing. There's no Tie Fighters, no AT-ATs...

Richie: ...And the droid ships are a bit crap.

Mark: It's quite good fun for a bit. But there are some horrible missions.

Steve: It's just shallow arcade action. I played it to the end, just bouncing off the scenery and shooting at things.

Richie: But again it's the best *Episode I* game. The *Racer* one was OK, but *Phantom Menace* was quite poor.

Keith: They're all pretty mindless.

Mark: So how does it compare to the other similar games?

Steve: *Rogue Squadron* is better, because it's proper *Star Wars*, it's not the muppet show that this is.

Richie: The problem is that you can't get it to run on new machines. It wants you to install DirectX 2.

Mark: It's the same with *Tie Fighter*. Even the Windows version is a bugger to run. At least *Starfighter* is a good conversion. Not just a rush job. The graphics are much better than the PS2 version.

JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

Anthony: Kyle Katarn is ridiculous.

Mark: If you play a game where you become a Jedi, you want to be a young Luke-type, not some old ponce with grey hair and a dodgy beard. And like *Alliance*, the first few hours of gameplay are dull as anything.

Richie: I hated it for ages until I got the lightsaber, then I loved it.

Keith: I'm with you on hating it until you get the lightsaber, but I got it and hated it even more. Then I got the Jedi Force powers

IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY



Galaxies: the best game we've ever seen. That's right, ever.

THINGS ARE LOOKING GOOD FOR THE FUTURE OF STAR WARS ON THE PC

There may only be two PC games in development, but they look set to redefine *Star Wars* gaming and blow away all past titles. *Baldur's Gate* developer BioWare is working on *Knights Of The Old Republic*, a 3D RPG-set 4,000 years before the films and sporting gorgeous graphics and massive worlds to explore.

The real eye-catcher, though, is *Galaxies*, a stunning MMORPG that is bound to turn even the most ardent *EverQuest*-haters into online freaks. This isn't just the future of *Star Wars* games, it's the future of gaming full stop. Imagine hundreds of thousands of people pretending to be bounty hunters, Jedis, Wookiee shopkeepers, or damn near anything they want to be. Who needs reality when you can live inside your favourite film?



Pure arcade fun, but don't expect *Starfighter* to last you more than a weekend.

and hated it even more. It's just a load/save/load/save trial-and-error game, especially when you're jumping around that outside building when you're looking for the merchant.

Mark: Some of the levels are really badly designed.

Richie: Yeah, but it's the good kind of frustration you don't get in games any more, where you just want to keep trying until you crack it.

Keith: I only played it because I had to. I will never touch it again.

Mark: As far as I'm concerned it's bad frustrating. Good frustrating is *Ghost Recon* or *Hidden & Dangerous*.

Keith: What did the developers

goddamn doors.

Richie: They've captured the *Star Wars* elements really well though. Like the Stormtroopers looking just right.

Steve: The first time I felt I was in *Star Wars* was when you take control of that little scuttle droid, and whiz about with a fish-eye view. That's quite amazing. And probably the first vaguely interesting thing that happened.

Mark: And later on you get to do the same with an R2 unit. The lightsaber worked in a similar way to *Max Payne*'s bullet time in that *Max Payne* would have been an ordinary game without it... *Jedi Outcast* would be completely average without

to allow you to do this.

Keith: That stupid barman who only talks in plural really annoyed me. What's going on with that? Who is he? Why does he do it? Where does he come from?

Steve: What annoys me is the way you just keep pressing all these panels and switches. You don't know what they do, but you press them because it's an FPS and that's what you do.

Mark: We're like trained pigeons, that's what we are.

Richie: Well, even with all the flaws, I absolutely loved it. **EW**

THE WINNER IS... JEDI KNIGHT II



THERE WAS DISSENT AMONG THE RANKS BUT JEDI KNIGHT II JUST MANAGES TO SCRAPE THROUGH

It was by no means a unanimous winner – it was hated nearly as much as it was loved – but *Jedi Knight II* won by three votes to two. As far as Richie was concerned: "It's the best *Star Wars* game yet. It starts off badly, but the lightsaber saves it completely." For Anthony it was the multiplayer that did it. "The bots are quite good and use the Force too, and it's just fun chopping people in half," he said. Steve thought it was the best "purely because it's the best genre of the lot and it's better than the previous shooters."

Mark wasn't quite so sure and ended up choosing *X-Wing Alliance*, because "the space sims recreate the *Star Wars* feel best." While for strategy lover Keith there was only one choice: "*Battlegrounds*. It uses the *Age Of Empires* engine and has the most recognisable units and characters." So there.

"I felt guilty smashing up Alec Guinness' house in that first mission. That's just wrong"

STEVE ON FORCE COMMANDER

say? Let's make a really good level. Let's make a big room, put loads of boxes in it and make players jump from one to the other. Yes, that's brilliant, chaps. Let's do that.

Mark: All the so-called puzzles are about really contrived level design or completely hidden holes, or ledges you were supposed to jump to. You just get lost all the time.

Steve: I thought I was in a *Star Trek* game, there were so many

the lightsaber bits.

Richie: I love it when you come up against a few Jedis, somersault over them and accidentally pull off a move that chops one in half.

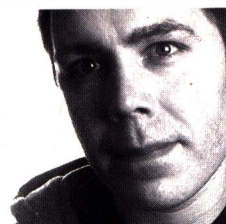
Mark: Then there's that hangar full of Tie Fighters, which all look fantastic and you can even run along the platform and stand on top of one. You just want to get in one. There should have been something like the tank missions in *Medal Of Honor*



The lightsaber saves the day in *Jedi Outcast*.

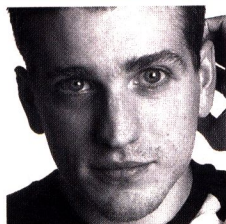
THE VERDICT

ALTHOUGH IT WASN'T A LANDSLIDE VICTORY, ONE GAME DID END UP RISING ABOVE THE REST



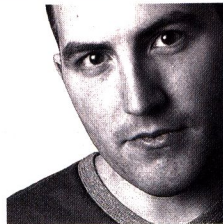
RICHIE

Jedi II
Alliance
Star Wars Arcade



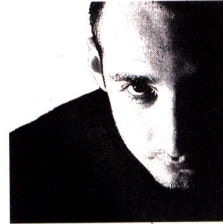
ANTHONY

Jedi II
Battlegrounds
Rogue Squadron



MARK

Alliance
Jedi II
Tie Fighter



KEITH

Battlegrounds
Starfighter
SW Arcade



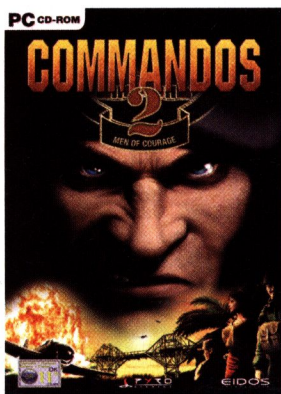
STEVE

Jedi II
Starfighter
Rogue Squadron

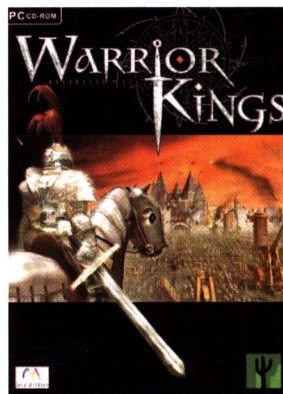
BEST GAME
RUNNER-UP

BEST STAR WARS EVER

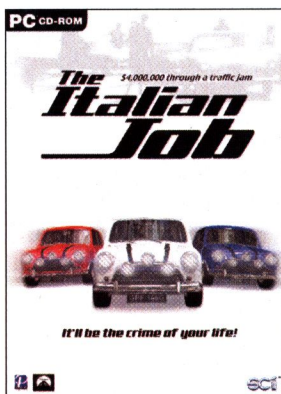
2 GAMES



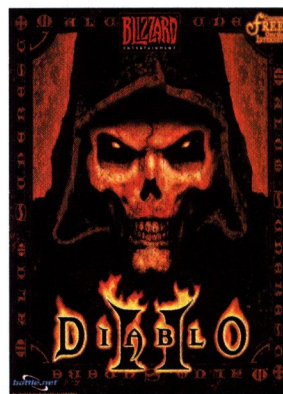
COMMANDOS 2



WARRIOR KINGS



THE ITALIAN JOB

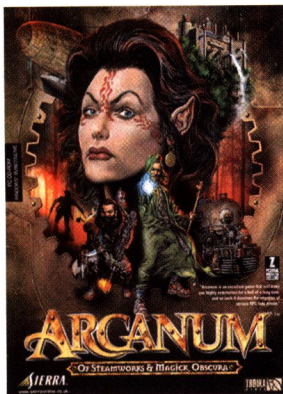


DIABLO II

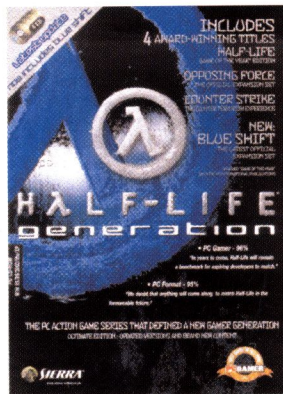
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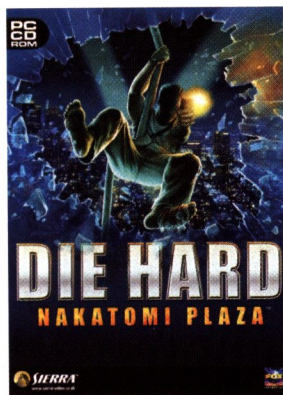
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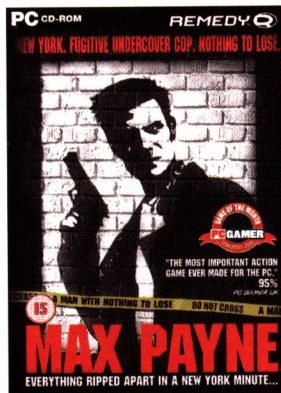
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HALF-LIFE GENERATION 3



DIE-HARD:
NAKATOMI PLAZA



MAX PAYNE

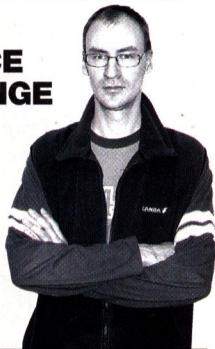
WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

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HARDWARE

THE PACE OF CHANGE



■ **HARD WIRED** Tim Ponting

▲ 'Stop the world! I want to get off!' Whether it's the title of a Broadway musical or hideous vocal from an Extreme album, that phrase sums up how most bosses of Taiwanese high-tech companies must feel – or for that matter, the heads of any company designing any kind of chip.

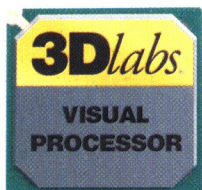
Pity the motherboard chipset specialists. Firstly, they have to worry about which platform to support, Pentium 4 or Athlon XP and all the licensing issues that go with that decision. Then there are such niceties as front-side bus speeds and their different associated processors. Throw into this mix a bewildering array of memory configurations: Rambus of varying speeds, DDR at 200MHz, 266MHz, 333MHz and even 400MHz, DDR2 coming at 400MHz, 533MHz and 667MHz.

The upshot of all this innovation is an ever-accelerating rate of change – and this isn't necessarily a great thing in commercial terms. If a motherboard manufacturer has to release too many products just to satisfy the possible processor, chipset, bus and memory combinations, they're going to start losing money. The vendors will hate it as they'll be left with outdated boxes they can't shift. And the chipset manufacturers will be gambling as to the direction the market is headed.

While the technological leaps we've experienced, most recently in memory performance, have all contributed to the staggering amount of desktop power, part of me can't help wishing standards hung around for as long as they used to. Because ultimately, all this commercial pressure leads to mergers, mergers lead to monopolies and monopolies lead to higher prices. And that we certainly don't want.

NEW 3D CHIPSET

NVIDIA and ATI might be slugging it out for the undisputed heavyweight championship, but there's a new challenger in town and it's ready to kick butt...



AS WE REVEALED in our May issue (#115), Creative Labs has acquired veteran graphics specialist 3Dlabs, though it'll take some time for the transfer to be completed. However, the company is bounding straight out of the traps, actually bringing forward its long-awaited announcement regarding its next-generation chipsets.

3Dlabs will remain a separate company, and workstation products will continue to use this brand. However, it's confirmed that there will be a Creative Labs' branded gaming card, which should arrive before the end of the year using next-generation technology.

GET WITH THE PROGRAM

So what's all the hoo-hah about then? In a PR move worthy of NVIDIA at its craftiest, 3Dlabs calls its new chip the world's first 'VPU' or Visual Processing Unit. Move over GPU, your time is up...

The basic idea of the VPU is to combine the best elements of

a CPU, its 'freeform' programmability, with the efficiency of an architecture designed with 3D rendering in mind. 3Dlabs' first step in this direction is its brand spanning new P10 chipset, which introduces programmability to more steps in the rendering pipeline than any other chip to date.

"The confluence of high-level shading languages such as OpenGL 2.0 and upcoming versions of DirectX, combined with 3Dlabs' VPUs, will enable new classes of visual applications," claims Neil Trevett, senior VP of market development. "The ability to take complex shading algorithms, like those used to create realistic film animations, and accelerate them on highly parallel Visual Processors is a major step towards interactive visual realism. The industry has been working towards this for over 20 years."

Of course, they would say that, wouldn't they? However,

there's an awful lot going for P10 that can support this purple prose. It has a 256-bit DDR memory interface, immediately doubling the memory bandwidth compared with its 128-bit interface competition, GeForce 4 and Radeon 8500. 3Dlabs is claiming a theoretical memory bandwidth of 20Gb/sec – if you do the sums, this should be possible via a 256-bit interface using 650MHz DDR memory like the GeForce 4 Ti4600 currently has.

OPEN HOUSE

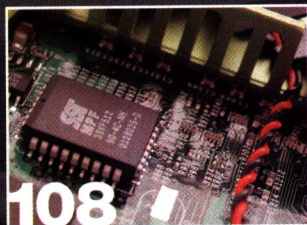
Another far-reaching architectural improvement involves a complete change in the relationship between your PC's RAM and the local memory on the video card. With traditional graphics card architecture, the two memory areas are distinct, which is why developers tend to be careful to limit the number and size of the textures such that any that are needed at a given moment fit within the local memory on the graphics card itself. If they don't, textures have to be read laboriously from system memory into local memory and the performance hit can be massive. However, 3Dlabs has introduced a 'Virtual Memory System' (VMS), which uses system memory for storing textures and treats the local memory on the video card as a huge cache. While the detailed explanation of the efficacy of this set-up is beyond the scope of this article, it allows developers to use much larger textures without worrying about sudden drops in performance. This has been on the wish-list of such luminaries as Carmack and Sweeney for a long time.

From a political point of view, it's interesting that 3Dlabs has been aggressively driving the imminent OpenGL 2.0 standard. Observers reckon that just as NVIDIA wedged itself so firmly in Microsoft's bed that GeForce 3 became 'the DirectX 8 card', so 3Dlabs has the chance to become 'the OpenGL 2.0 card'. Developers seem pretty keen on

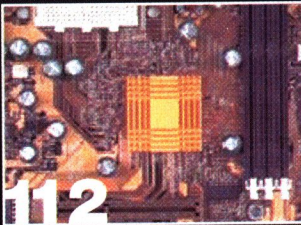


id favours OpenGL, and it looks like the new card is tipping its hat in this direction.

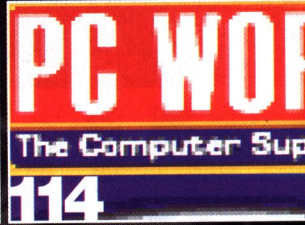
"In a PR move worthy of NVIDIA at its craftiest, 3D labs calls its new chip the world's first VPU"



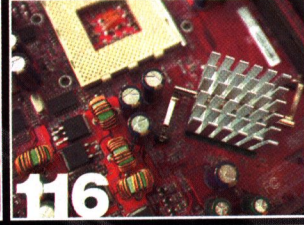
108
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112
DEAR WANDY
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114
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116
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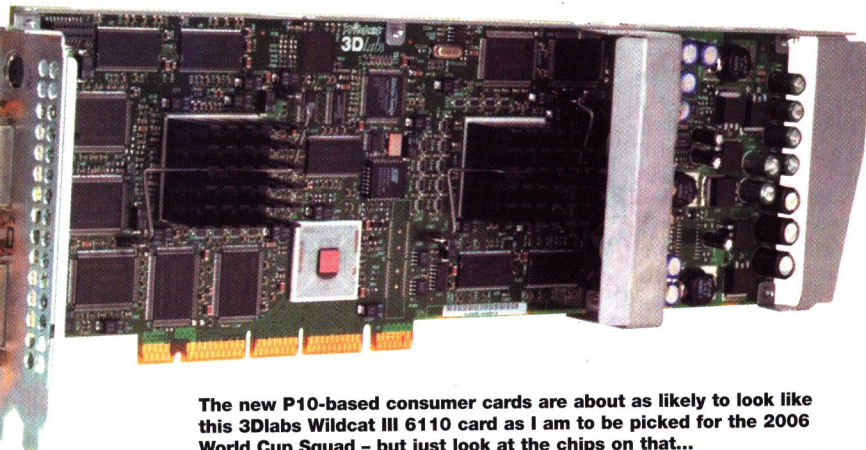
the gradual evolution of OGL, but it remains to be seen how significant version 2 will prove in the market.

On the other hand, it's a shame that P10 will not be a DirectX 9 part – thanks among other things to the fact its pixel pipelines don't use floating point calculations throughout. Its successors surely will, but there just isn't enough space on the chip at present for the extra transistors that would be required.

BRAINS AND BRAWN

Though it's easy to get over-excited by the 3Dlabs announcement, it should be tempered with caution. We simply don't know what NVIDIA and ATI have in their labs at present, and it may well be that with the arrival of their DirectX 9 cards later in the year, P10 will be leapfrogged. However, Creative has muscle – lots of it – and provided P10 is cheap and fast, it has the chance of taking the gladiatorial role from PowerVR, for some time at least.

What of the other competition? Matrox have something interesting up their sleeve we can't tell you about – watch out for more news



The new P10-based consumer cards are about as likely to look like this 3Dlabs Wildcat III 6110 card as I am to be picked for the 2006 World Cup Squad – but just look at the chips on that...

on this soon. And, of course, don't forget our friends over at Imagination Technology; while the pumped-up Kyro II is unlikely to set the world on fire, we could be in for a treat with future PowerVR incarnations. Even motherboard chipset manufacturer SIS is muscling in, though we know few details about their video chipper. All that's certain is that, after a period of relative calm, the 3D graphics market is getting very competitive again, which can only be good news for the consumer.

“Though it's easy to get over-excited by the 3Dlabs announcement, it should be tempered with caution”

FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK... 3D PIPELINE (WARNING: TECH-JARGON)

Command Processor This can handle multiple threads of 3D commands which will be extremely useful when Microsoft Longhorn operating system takes over from present generation operating systems.

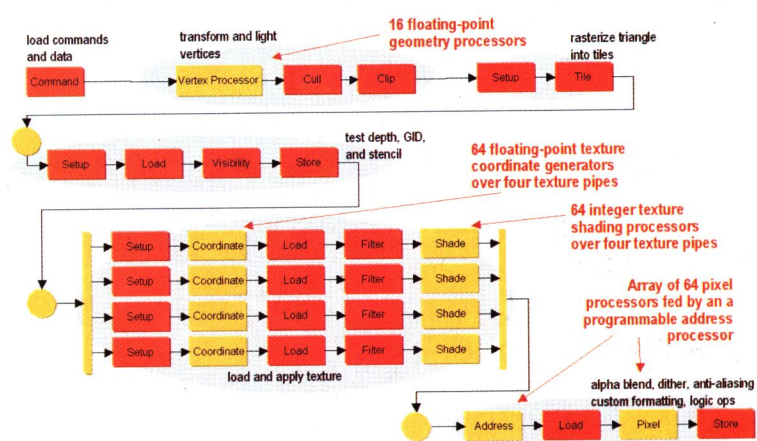
Vertex Processor This is actually an array of 16 scalar vertex processors; each four are roughly equivalent to one NVIDIA vertex shader and more efficient, with the net result that it should be about twice as fast as GeForce 4's twin vertex shader engines. Allegedly DirectX 9 compatible.

Tile Processor The P10 divides the image into tiles; this is more efficient for its caching architecture, and has nothing to do with the tile-based rendering system used by PowerVR to reduce overdraw (see below).

Visibility Processor Like NVIDIA and ATI, 3Dlabs has its own system for reducing overdraw, which makes sure the card doesn't waste memory by calculating pixels that end up invisible.

Four Pixel Pipelines Capable of applying eight textures per pass, the same as Kyro II, compared with six for ATI and four for NVIDIA. This leads to more realistic features, ordered developers utilise the feature.

Co-ordinated Generators Sixty-four programmable floating-point units are split



Blocks shown in yellow are fully programmable, in orange are fixed function

between the four pixel pipelines, used to determine texture coverage.

Filter Unit Applies fixed function texturing algorithms like anisotropic filtering.

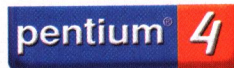
Shading Processors Sixty-four programmable integer units are split between the four pixel pipelines, used to determine the final colour of each pixel. This is similar to

NVIDIA's pixel shaders.

Pixel Processor Sixty-four programmable pixel processors are available to developers after the texturing has taken place. This is a unique feature of P10, and will allow custom anti-aliasing algorithms to be written among other nifty stuff. The pixel processor also allows the chipset to handle 64-bit colour.

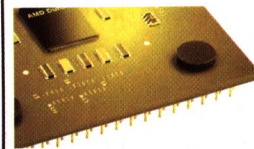
SNIPPETS

INTEL 2.53GHZ IS HERE...



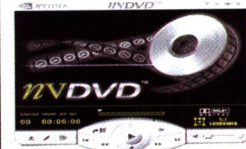
Intel has recently introduced its fastest desktop processor, the staggering 2.53GHz Pentium 4, running at a quad-pumped 533MHz. The real news though is that the first round of benchmarks are showing Intel beating AMD for the first time across the board for quite a while. As ever though, it's going to cost you dearly, especially with expensive RDRAM on top of the processor cost. We'll bring you a review shortly.

WHILE DURON LOOKS LIKE IT WILL DISAPPEAR...



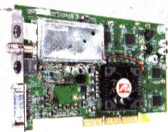
AMD's chairman Jerry Sanders has revealed that Duron will be discontinued later in the year. At a recent conference call with financial analysts, he asserted that by the end of the year, making Athlons would be so cheap as to render a 'sawn-off' version redundant. However, there will be one final version of Duron before it gives up the ghost, based on its 0.13 micron Appaloosa core – the Duron equivalent of the new 0.13 micron Thoroughbred Athlon XPs.

NV DVD ETA PDQ



NVIDIA has developed its own DVD playback software, which we should see bundled with most, if not all, NVIDIA graphics cards in future. While we can't vouch for the quality never having seen it, it certainly boasts a good spec, supporting Dolby Digital playback on 5.1 soundcards as standard, with the usual stuff like digital zoom, screen capture and so on. It's written with NVIDIA hardware in mind, hence should run smoothly as super-smooth peanut butter, and supports nView dual monitoring – watch a DVD on TV via your TV out, while running Windows on your display. At present, there are no plans to allow existing card owners to download the software, according to an NVIDIA spokesman – which is a crying shame.

SNIPPETS

NEW ALL-IN-WONDER
RADEON 8500

Remember our review of the All-in-Wonder Radeon 8500DV a couple of months ago? How we loved it for its multimedia features, but found the 3D performance a bit lacking? Well, those who want the best of both worlds need suffer no longer, as this is both as tool-up as the 8500DV, and clocked at the same speed as the full Radeon 8500. In fact, as it actually carries 128Mb DDR RAM on board, this should actually prove to be the fastest gaming card on the ATI block.

The downside? It's expensive, selling in the States for around \$399. We're not sure whether any UK vendors will take the plunge at that price, but keep your eyes peeled.

SIS RUMOURS

GPU Clock	Core	Memory	Pixel Pipeline	Texture Pipeline	DirectX	Price
300MHz	400MHz	400MHz	4x	4x	8.1	Xabre Ultra
400MHz	400MHz	400MHz	4x	4x	8.1	Xabre 80
400MHz	400MHz	400MHz	4x	4x	8.1	Xabre Lite

Respected techie site VR-Zone has published a table of clockspeeds of the new range of SIS 3D video chips. The Xabre Ultra, the top-of-the-range beast, has four pixel pipelines, is a full DirectX 8.1 card, with core clockspeed of 300MHz and memory clock of 600MHz. This should in theory at least put it in GeForce 4 Ti territory, with a claimed memory bandwidth of 9.6Gb/sec.

Perhaps more interesting is that there are no fewer than four different card configurations, and by implication it is more likely to compete at the GeForce 4 MX end of the market than the GeForce 4 Titanium range. If the processors are cheap, then things could get considerably more competitive at the low end of the market.

STOP PRESS! NEXT GEN
MATROX CHIP REVEALED

Just as we went to press, Matrox formally announced its next gen graphics chip, the Parhelia-512, as mentioned in our news piece on page 105. Boasting the most complex rendering engine ever built, the Parhelia is the world's first 512-bit GPU, and promises significantly higher performance than the top GeForce 4. One of the coolest features is the Surround Gaming technology that enables you to run games across three monitors, giving you peripheral vision in shooters, or spare screens for, say, maps and chat in RPGs. No word on prices yet, but we'll have a full run-down on the chip and see how it stacks up next to 3D Labs' P10 next month.

XP HEADACHES

Open GL limited to 60Hz, DirectX to 75Hz under XP? Surely not? Uh-oh...

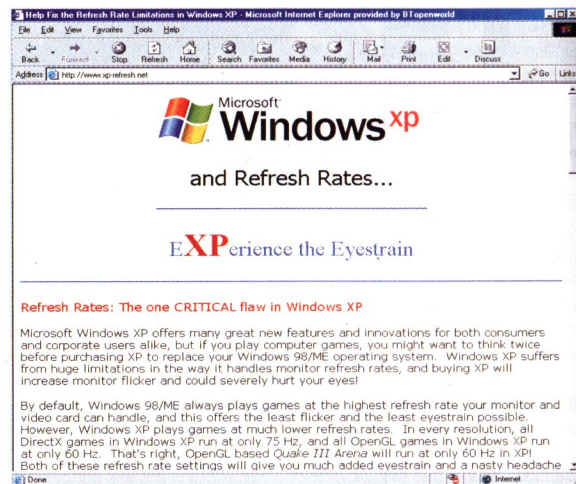
A COUPLE of months ago, we moved the PC ZONE video card benchmarking suite over from Windows 98SE to Windows XP, at the same time replacing *Quake III Arena* with *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*. We noticed at the time that whenever we changed the resolution, the console always reported a refresh rate of 60Hz. This we put down to a peculiarity of *Wolfenstein* and promptly forgot about it.

But oh no, it's not just a *Wolfie* issue. It transpires that all OpenGL-based games run at a refresh rate of just 60Hz under Windows XP. Unlike Windows 98, which has an 'optimal' setting used by the O/S to allocate the maximum refresh rate your monitor can handle at a given resolution which in turn is used by all games, you have to

determine manually what refresh rate to use for your desktop resolution. As a result, games appear to have no set of default refresh rates for various resolutions to fall back on and XP simply runs at 60Hz – safe, but extremely bad for your eyes.

To make matters worse, it appears that DirectX games are similarly limited, this time to 75Hz – better, but still likely to give eyestrain in an extended session... Most modern monitors support 85Hz, 100Hz or even 120Hz at typical gaming resolutions, all of which give significantly less of a headache after long periods of gaming.

At the time of going to press, we approached Microsoft with the issue to find out what's going on. We imagine the problem may be fixed in a Service Pack, but then again, maybe not... As



soon as the company's response arrives, we'll publish it. Until then, head over to www.xp-refresh.net and check out a fine example of a crusading site.

There you'll also find some tips to get around the problem – not universally successful or necessarily free, I'm afraid. Watch this space.

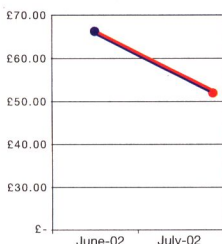
PRICEWATCH

Watch out: memory prices are falling...

MEMORY

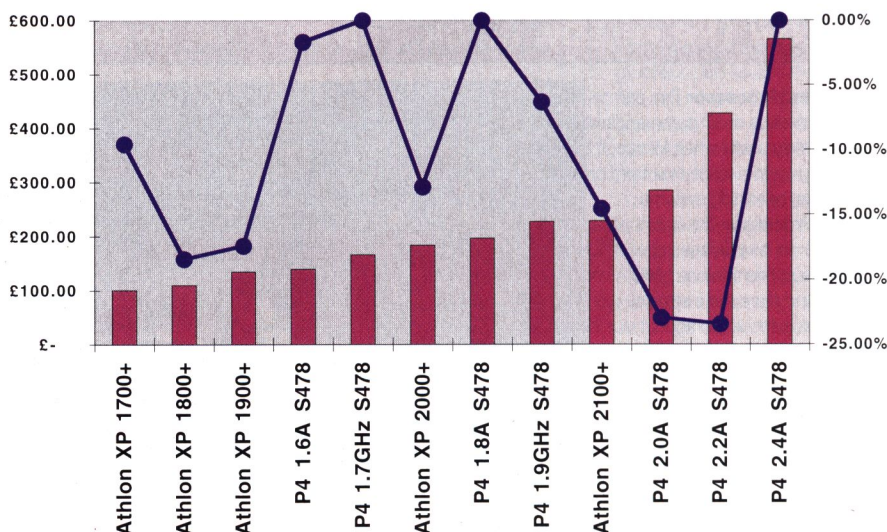
Things are calming down in the Far East, and memory prices are starting to drop again. A modest fall has come through this month, taking prices back to where they were in early February – £53.09 for both PC133 and PC2100 DDR RAM. Most observers are predicting that the price will continue to drop for a while – barring acts of God, of course, and almost any of the other things that seem to put the price of memory up.

In other news, PC2700 DDR RAM has entered the market at £77.39 for 256Mb. Hurrah, and thanks to Crucial.com for supplying the prices.



Price per 256Mb RAM:
● PC133 SDR
● PC2100 DDR

PROCESSORS: PRICE AND PERCENTAGE DROP



PROCESSORS

With the arrival of Intel's 2.4GHz Pentium 4 comes a shake-up on pricing – as we predicted last month, though radical price changes have yet to filter down through the chain, and don't look

quite as radical as eWeek originally projected! However, the biggest drops this month are both courtesy of P4s, and both by close to 25 per cent – which is hefty indeed. A 2.0GHz P4 is no longer twice the price of an

Athlon XP2000+. However, low-end P4s are looking very pricey as things stand alongside Athlon companions, which all saw cuts of between 6 and 19 per cent. We like the look of an Athlon XP 1900+ for around £134...

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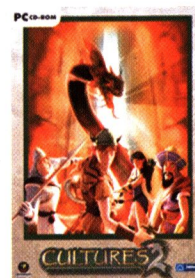


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ATI is getting closer and closer to NVIDIA all the time, says Tim Ponting

SINCE Hercules jumped ship and abandoned NVIDIA in favour of ATI as video card chipset supplier of choice, we've seen a stream of new boards from the manufacturer, though we've yet to see a plain old Radeon-8500. There's just the All-In-Wonder 8500DV, which is slower, and the All-In-Wonder 7500 which isn't even a DirectX 8 card.

Sadly, we still aren't quite there yet. The Radeon 8500 LE is a slightly underclocked Radeon 8500, featuring a 250MHz core clockspeed and memory running at 500MHz (DDR). This compares favourably with the Hercules 8500DV which runs at 230MHz and 380MHz DDR respectively, but isn't quite on a par with the plain 8500 at 275MHz and 550MHz DDR respectively.

However, it does fall quite neatly into its own niche. The 8500 LE is definitely the cheapest fully DirectX 8.1-compatible video card available at the time of writing. It is more expensive than most of its GeForce 4 MX rivals, but these as we've seen are more like GeForce 2 cards with a pumped-up memory management system. Similarly, it looks likely for the time being to be cheaper than the NVIDIA GeForce 4 Titanium 4200 card, reviewed in engineering sample form here.. What this means in reality is that it undercuts its closest NVIDIA

competitor in terms of supported graphical features.

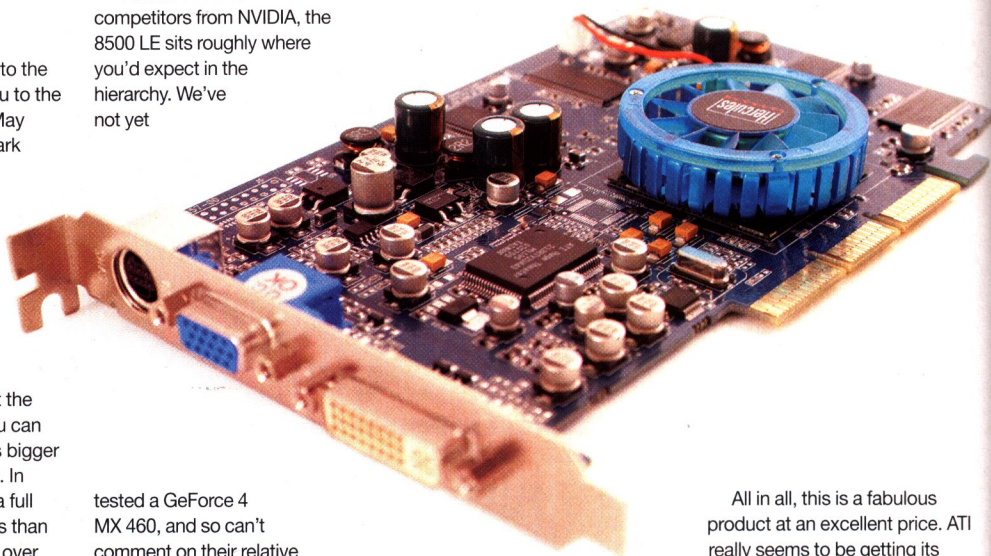
NO SURPRISES

The Radeon 8500 LE is functionally pretty similar to the full 8500, so we'll refer you to the full review carried in the May 2002 issue 115. Benchmark results are very respectable, particularly for a card in this price range, though there are no real surprises. It's faster than the 'crippled' 8500DV card, but slower than the full 8500. If you check out the 3D Mark 2001 results, you can see the 8500LE trailing its bigger brother by a small margin. In fact, unless you can buy a full 8500 for considerably less than the current going rates of over £200, the LE blasts it away in terms of value for money.

The OpenGL benchmark results using our custom *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* tests paint a similar picture, though interestingly it occasionally outperformed the 8500. We find that *Wolfenstein* can give highly variable frame-rate results, hence we run each test seven times and take the average of the lowest five; even so, in this case the 8500 LE seemed particularly wild in its gyrations. Again, it is only marginally behind its more expensive sibling, and hence is a better

buy as far as OpenGL is concerned too.

Placed in context with its competitors from NVIDIA, the 8500 LE sits roughly where you'd expect in the hierarchy. We've not yet



tested a GeForce 4 MX 460, and so can't comment on their relative performance, but it clearly outperforms our trusty Sparkle GF4 MX 440 without too much difficulty, across the board under 3D Mark 2001 and at higher resolutions or with Full Screen Anti-Aliasing active under OpenGL. But if you're not running a game at more than 1024 by 768 and think FSAA is for people who like pretty screens rather than fast frag action, then you might as well stick with a cheaper MX.

GET YOURSELF CONNECTED

The Hercules product is a typically high quality affair – the

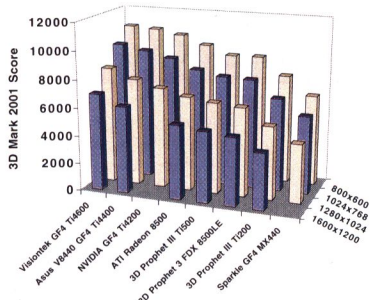
company appears to have manufactured this card itself, rather than rebadged an ATI board, though we'd have liked to have seen more driver customisation or at least a bigger heatsink for overclocking.

The card has a full set of outputs: analogue VGA, DVI for flat panel displays and TV out – an S-Video to Composite Video converter is supplied if your TV isn't equipped with S-Video socketry. Hercules also bundles the PowerDVD 4.0 XP software DVD player.

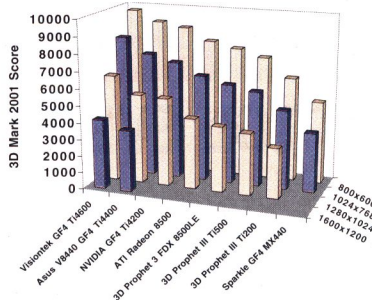
All in all, this is a fabulous product at an excellent price. ATI really seems to be getting its drivers together at last, and the 6015 version, while not the most recent, works perfectly with the card as supplied by Hercules. As long as it stays comfortably cheaper than the GeForce 4 Ti4200, it's got a future. However, if you can stretch that bit further, the NVIDIA solution rewards you with more performance. As ever, it's up to your wallet.

PCZONE VERDICT 87
Better value than the plain 8500

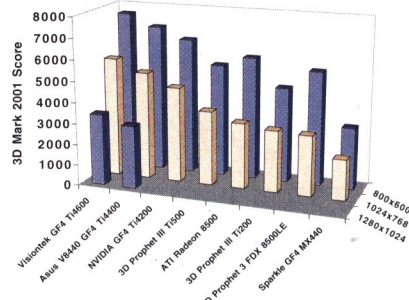
3D MARK 2001 NO FSAA



3D MARK 2001 2x FSAA



3D MARK 2001 4x FSAA



NVIDIA GEFORCE 4 TI4200

■ Manufacturer: NVIDIA | Price: £160-£180 (estimated) | Phone: N/A | www.nvidia.co.uk

Another day, another GeForce 4 card... Tim Ponting wonders where it's all going to end

THERE'S been a healthy dose of cynicism flying around the Net regarding the 4200 incarnation of the GeForce 4 range. The 4400 and 4600 were both pretty much available from the day of the product launch, while vendors have just been shaking their heads when it comes to supplying a 4200. This, many speculate, is because it was a late entrant into the GeForce 4 family as a spoiler to cheaper Radeon 8500s, sitting between the inferior GeForce 4 MX and superior GF4 Ti4400.

To be frank, we don't actually give a toss why the 4200 was created, why it's late or what anyone thinks about NVIDIA or ATI's motivations. The important thing is, the Titanium 4200 gives the consumer yet another choice of a performance at a reasonable pricepoint, which can only be good news.

The 4200 is a 'proper' GeForce 4, that is it shares the same engine as the 4400 and 4600 cards with twin vertex shaders and a single improved pixel shader. Like the Radeon 8500, it's a DirectX 8.1 part, and as such is future proof for the next couple of years – before we all start playing DirectX 9 games, of course, by which time I'll have grey hair and a beard down to my navel.

CRASH, BANG, WALLOP

For the full low-down on GeForce 4, check out the last

three issues, all of which to a greater or lesser extent cover the range in detail. The 64Mb version of the Ti4200 supplied as an engineering sample by NVIDIA themselves was clocked with a core speed of 250MHz and memory at 500MHz DDR; this compares with 275/550 for the 4400 and 300/650 for the top-of-the-range 4600.

As I'm sure NVIDIA has intended, the top honours in every category fall to the GeForce 4 Titanium range – the 4600 followed by the 4400 trailed by the 4200. In all resolutions and with every combination of FSAA, the Titanium 4200 managed to pip the Radeon 8500 to the post under OpenGL, a fabulous achievement considering its lower intended pricepoint – though we may well see a response from ATI and its partners here!

However, the lack of memory bandwidth does start to bite in high resolutions and FSAA – the 4600 can be twice as fast in certain circumstances, though nothing ATI can throw into the equation competes even with the Ti4200.

Under 3D Mark 2001, we initially had a few inexplicable crashes, hence we're missing some of the high-resolution results. However, given this is an

engineering pre-release, we're pretty confident that all will be well by the time retail boards arrive, especially since we had no problems in 'real' DirectX games as opposed

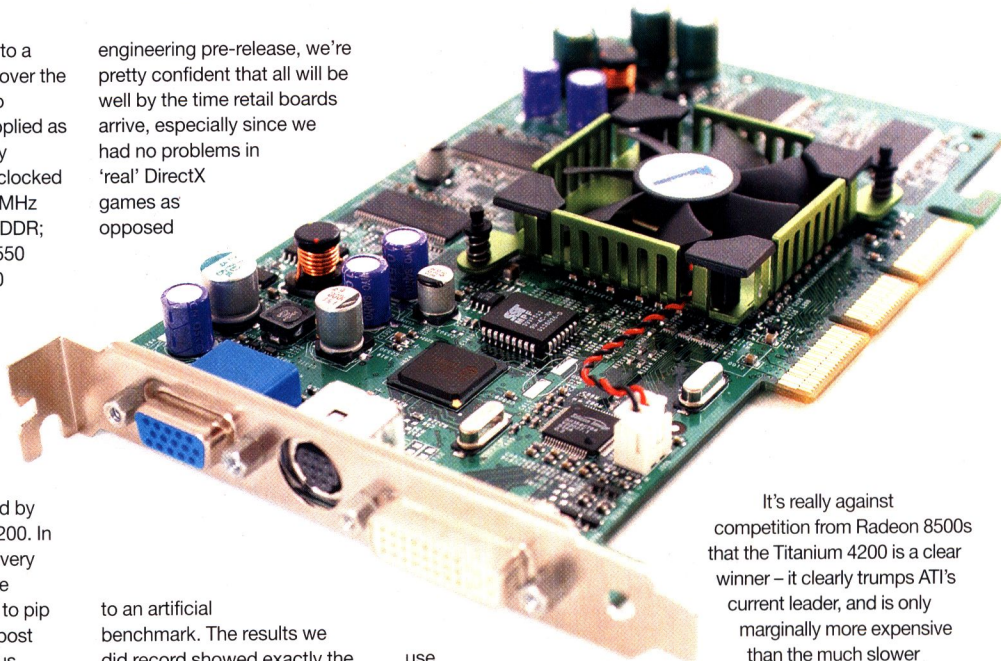
to an artificial benchmark. The results we did record showed exactly the performance we'd expect, once again beating the Radeon family into third place behind its 4600 and 4400 siblings.

SHORT-TERM MEMORY

So, given its excellent price-performance ratio, why on earth would anyone want to buy anything other than a GeForce 4 Ti4200? Well, for starters, you need to remember that this card was supplied with just 64Mb memory. While this is fine for most current-generation games, we suspect that the new *Unreal 2*-engined titles around the corner might just start making

use of that 128Mb for textures if you crank detail up to maximum. The Ti4200 can apparently be supplied by vendors with 128Mb DDR memory, but this will either increase the price or require slower memory than 500MHz DDR to be utilised.

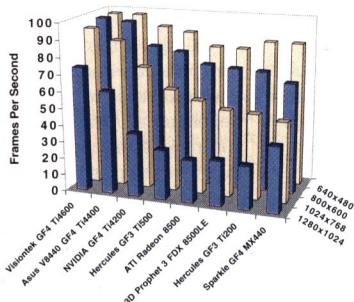
The Titanium 4400 remains a fabulous all-rounder, but of course you'll still need well over £220 to unlock its glory. It's the old money thing again; the prices of 4600 cards are still stratospheric, but then again so is its performance.



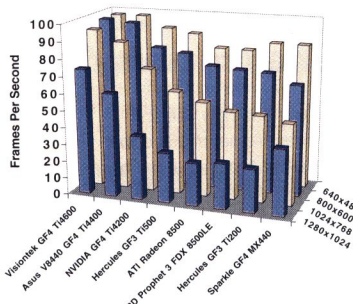
It's really against competition from Radeon 8500s that the Titanium 4200 is a clear winner – it clearly trumps ATI's current leader, and is only marginally more expensive than the much slower Radeon 8500 LE reviewed here. That's a great product for the money, but if you really can pick up a Ti4200 in the UK for £160 at launch, the price of the LE is going to have to be dropped to find its own niche. One thing's for certain – it's another good reason to save a few more pennies and avoid those GeForce 4 MXs completely... **TP**

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **93**
**Great value Radeon
8500 killer**

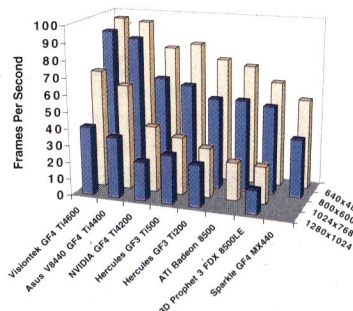
WOLFENSTEIN NO FSAA

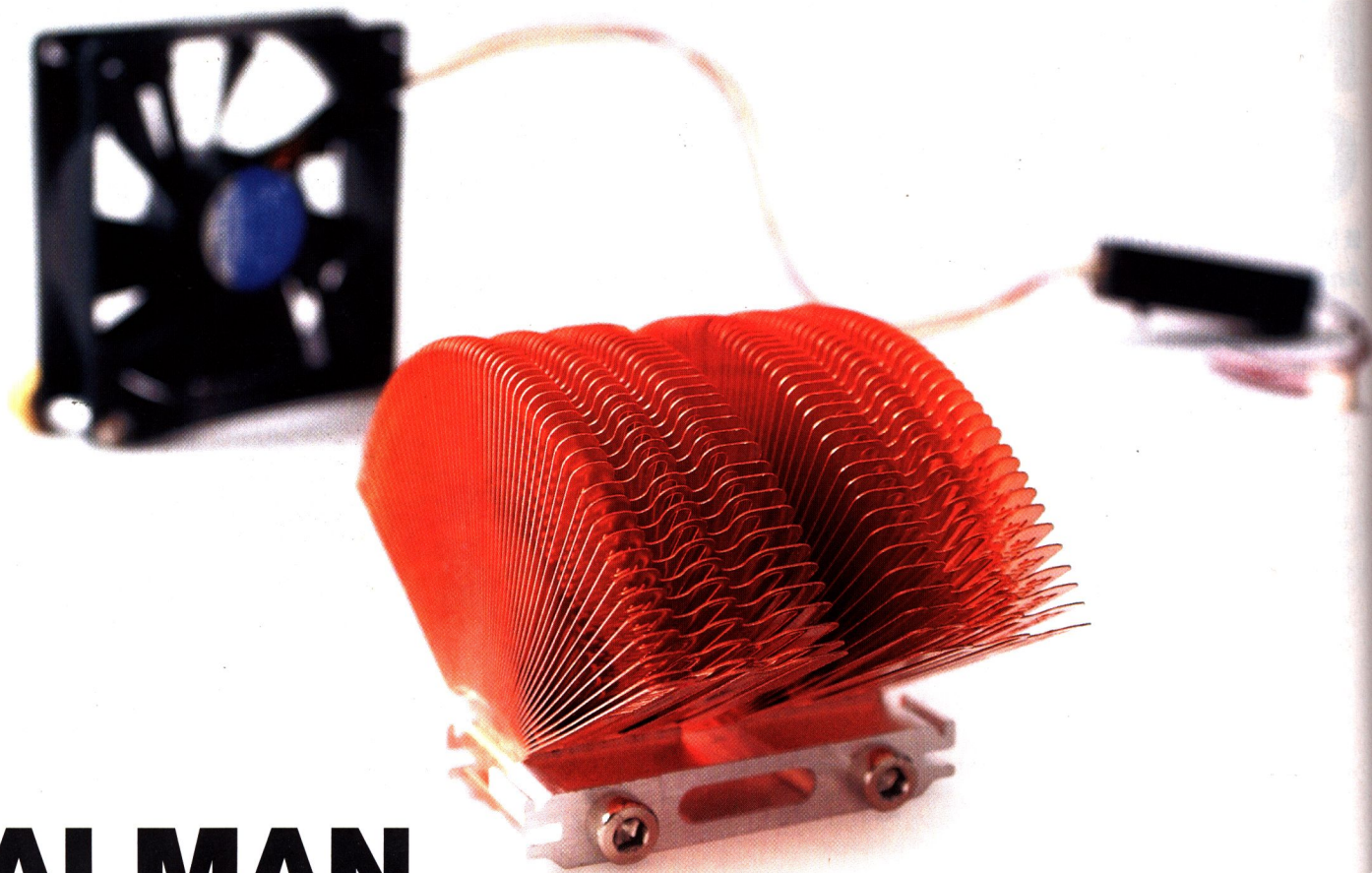


WOLFENSTEIN 2x FSAA



WOLFENSTEIN 4x FSAA





ZALMAN FLOWER COOLER

■ Manufacturer: Zalman | Price: £39.95 inc VAT | Phone: 0870 321 4620 | www.quietpc.com

It may look ridiculous, but the Zalman Flower Cooler is a geek's best friend

IT'S comparatively recently that members of the *ZONE* team have been upgrading their personal machines from the likes of Pentium III 500s and Athlon 750s. Yes, they do play games on 'real' platforms, people. Geek boy Ponting has been building new ones for some of 'em – fast P4s and Athlon XPs – and all very straightforward and shockingly spoddy the process has been too.

Out of every possible issue we've had with the machines – compatibility, NVIDIA or ATI, Intel or Athlon – there's been one problem common to all these beasts; and that's keeping the damn things cool.

PASS THE ICE BUCKET, MAN

Modern CPUs can get extremely hot very quickly unless adequately cooled. Don't try this one at home folks – but as a friend recently discovered, just switching on an Athlon without connecting the CPU fan

can fry the processor in less time than it takes to go take a pee. For this reason, it's well worth investigating your BIOS settings – many have a 'temperature alarm' and 'temperature power down' settings, which will register an alarm when the CPU gets too hot and ultimately switch off the power before it fries.

Try a quick trawl of the online sites that sell PC components, but you'll only find a handful of fans rated for Athlon XP 2000+.

"The vast majority of fans have one major failing. They're noisy"

And as we have discovered, the vast majority of these have one major failing. They're noisy.

Many of them have small diameter fans that run at up to 8,000 RPM, kicking out a hefty 47dBa or even higher. This makes them a candidate for noisiest component in a modern PC, as PSU fans and hard

drives are getting quieter these days. In fact, I recently bought a meaty CPU fan that was so noisy, it was completely unacceptable, with a periodic whine and huge whooshing noise. Kept the CPU cool, admittedly, but at what cost?

SMELL THE FLOWERS, MAN

We mentioned the Zalman Flower Cooler in our quiet PC feature a few months back, but now we've had a chance to test

it in use. Basically, the unit consists of a set of 56 copper fins bolted together at the base by two aluminium blocks; the fins are spread radially to aid heat dissipation, and the base is ground smooth to ensure perfect contact between the heatsink and CPU. A large, 92mm fan is suspended above the 'flower'

from a special bracket attached to the case slots, cooling both the CPU and the motherboard chipset. The unit is also supplied with a rheostat allowing the fan speed to be varied from around 1,600 to 2,500 RPM. At 1,600 it's virtually inaudible, at 2,000 very quiet, and at 2,500 RPM marginally intrusive – but a country mile from most cooling solutions of this efficacy.

QuietPC.com, the official UK distributors of the Zalman range, imply on their website it should work well with anything up to an XP 2000+. In the event, we reckon you could push this quite happily to include the 2100+ or maybe even faster clockspeeds as they arrive. In torture testing, we couldn't get an Athlon XP 2000+ to run hotter than 56 degrees, even with the fan registering just 1,360 RPM with the attached rheostat – especially impressive considering our old fan/sink assembly which was originally supplied by AMD themselves

used to run both noisier and hotter during the same test. Idle temperatures remained in all cases under 47 degrees.

Not only is the solution near silent, but it gives excellent cooling performance. It's also the easiest fan assembly we've ever come across for Socket A processors. A special tool makes attaching the clip simple – and a spare is also provided, as is the thermal compound you need. The pressure on the CPU is also far lower than most fan assemblies.

We think at this price, you can make no wiser cooling decision if noise and performance are both issues. Just make sure your case will take it – as long as the CPU isn't underneath the PSU, you should be fine. **PCZ**

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

95

It's cool, man

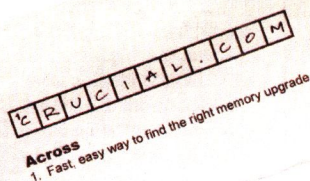


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WINDOESNOT 98

Q My PC has a really bad problem. It sounds like an OK machine on paper: 700MHz Athlon, 128MB RAM, Sound Blaster PCI128, ATI Rage 128. But games run badly on it. The latest games are slow and jerky, with stuttering sound. Titles such as *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* are playable with everything turned down, but only just. Some games are totally unplayable including *Comanche 4*, *Medal Of*

Honor and *AvP2*. It's not just games though, DVD movies run peculiarly as well, running fast for a second or two, then slowing down and jerking for a few seconds with bad lip sync. Windows is also slow opening menus and folders. Something's wrong here. So what is it? Bad cooling? Something wrong with the PSU? Is my crappy Rage 128 slowing everything down? Is it Windows 98's infamous wastage? Or is it just that

700MHz is way too slow for today's games?

Matthew Durrant

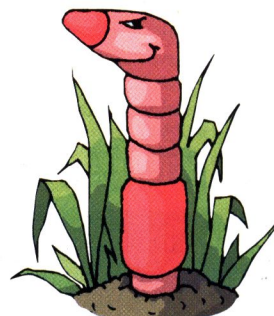
A I read the first two sentences and thought, "I wonder if he's running Windows 98". I read the third and fourth sentences and thought, "You know, I think he might be running Windows 98." I kept going, the repellent smell of decaying operating system growing stronger by the word, and finally you came out with it. You have Windows 98 on your hard drive. Nasty. Clean it off by formatting it - make a copy of your files first. Put the original Microsoft CD in your microwave and blast it.

Replace it with Windows 2000 (if you're on a budget, Windows XP Home Edition). Then pull out your ATI card and stamp on it repeatedly. Replace it with whatever NVIDIA card you can afford. Put it all together and your PC will start to breathe again. Trust me on this.

WORM ARMAGEDDON

Q I've got a problem. When I use my PC, it randomly tries to connect to the Internet without being prompted. While I'm playing a game, it quits back to the desktop and the Dial-Up Connection window appears. This is becoming increasingly annoying and I have already tried to reinstall Windows 98 without any success. Hope you can help.

Mark



Worms may be good for the garden but they're bad for your PC.

A Buy yourself a decent anti-virus program, such as Norton Anti-Virus, which is the software I've used for many years. It sounds like you have a Trojan or a worm like SIRCAM on your PC, probably from an infected download or mail attachment. They lurk in the background and attempt to contact remote locations on the Internet when you're not looking. If you're using a dial-up connection, though, the symptoms are exactly as you describe - your modem will come to life at random moments. Get that anti-virus utility installed pronto and your problems should disappear.

POWER HOGS

Q When I start up my computer, there's a load of stuff running in the background that I'm not sure I really need. When I close it all down by hitting CTRL + ALT + DEL and using the task manager, my computer runs a whole load faster. However, I think it would be faster still if they just didn't start up in the first place. Can you tell me which programs I really don't need, and how to stop them appearing at start-up? Here's a list of all the programs that are running: OSD, Em_exec, Loadqm, Directcd, Winmgmt, Rundll32, Service, Mmkeybd, Ltmsg, Wkdetct.

Hymermant

A I believe OSD relates to hotkeys on HP keyboards. Em_exec is the Event Macro Executive. Loadqm is the Microsoft MSN query manager, used by MSN Messenger. Directcd is part of your Adaptec CD burner setup. Winmgmt is Windows Management Instrumentation. Mmkeybd is another HP keyboard driver. Ltmsg relates to your modem, and Wkdetct to Microsoft Works. If you're using Windows 95 or Windows 98, you can type MSCONFIG at a command prompt to see exactly what's starting up

WANDY'S TOP TIP

Windows Task Manager						
File Options View Help						
Applications Processes Performance						
Image Name	PID	CPU	CPU Time	Mem Usage	VM Size	Threads
LSASS.exe	224	00	0:00:37	564 K	2,580 K	15
smc.exe	1844	00	0:00:08	2,052 K	2,344 K	5
MsPMSPSV.exe	776	00	0:00:18	1,724 K	500 K	2
netask.exe	680	00	0:00:23	4,776 K	1,392 K	7
NetCaptor.exe	1776	00	0:00:02	14,088 K	5,956 K	9
oogag.exe	1104	00	3:56:49	12,420 K	9,748 K	15
promon.exe	964	00	0:00:00	1,160 K	380 K	1
regsvr.exe	664	00	0:00:09	912 K	264 K	2
rhvscan.exe	580	02	1:53:17	12,888 K	9,992 K	37
services.exe	212	00	0:02:21	8,248 K	3,388 K	36
SMSAPM32.exe	1096	00	0:00:01	172 K	1,100 K	4
smss.exe	140	00	0:00:01	556 K	1,068 K	6
Speedkey.exe	360	00	0:00:01	232 K	1,208 K	3
spoolsv.exe	432	00	0:00:18	5,660 K	3,072 K	14
svchost.exe	400	00	0:00:29	4,148 K	1,592 K	9
svchost.exe	544	00	0:00:29	7,136 K	2,692 K	27
System	0	00	0:24:01	212 K	24 K	32
System Idle Process	0	94	91:05:04	16 K	0 K	1
Tabex.exe	1116	03	0:09:23	12,468 K	15,304 K	11

Processes: 33 CPU Usage: 7% Mem Usage: 258012K / 251936K

Windows Task Manager is your friend, and you should have it by your side at all times.

MANAGING TASK MANAGER

Those of you using Windows NT, 2000 or XP will no doubt be familiar with the Windows Task Manager. Right-click on the task bar and click its name or give your PC the three-fingered salute (CTRL + ALT + DEL). As if by magic, a familiar face appears. Open the Options menu and make sure Hide when Minimized is checked. This makes sure that, when minimized, Task Manager won't hog space on your task bar but will continue to run as an animated system tray icon displaying your CPU usage - hover over the icon to see how much strain your system is under, and double-click to restore Task Manager. To ask that an application is terminated gracefully, select its name in the Applications tab and hit the End Task button. To remove processes immediately, choose the appropriate name in the Processes tab and click the End Process button. If your desktop has 'hung' or the icons are corrupt, select explorer.exe from the list and end it. Next, select New Task from the File menu and enter explorer - hey presto, brand new desktop. If you're really feeling adventurous, put C:\WINNT\system32\taskmgr.exe in your Start menu's startup folder, setting it to Run Minimized. Each time you start Windows, the Task Manager CPU usage monitor will be displayed in your system tray.

Each issue I'll divulge one of my top tips, unless you can do better. Send 'em to the address above, and if I think the tip is top enough I'll print it and send you £50.

"An old install of Windows 98 will be simply atrocious in terms of speed and reliability"

"Still full of holes, still missing drivers, XP is about to be replaced"

when Windows appears. If you're using NT, 2000 or XP, you'll need to have a look inside the Registry. Click on Start and press Run. Type regedit and press Enter. Browse to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion and later to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion. All entries in the Run folders are opened when you start Windows.

SPEED READER

Q I have an ASUS A7A133 Motherboard, a Duron 1000MHz CPU, a Belinea 102010 monitor and a Creative Labs GeForce2 MX200 graphics card, and I have two problems. The first is in the BIOS setup. There is a setting to enable FAST WRITE for AGP graphics, and although I've emailed Creative, they have not answered as to whether this should be enabled or disabled. Next, I use Creative's own drivers for my graphics card, and since then NVIDIA has released two newer versions. I've tried both, but have the same problem: I run at 800x600 at 85Hz. If I use the NVIDIA drivers it always reverts back to a 60Hz refresh rate, even if I go into the settings and up the refresh rate manually – the next time I reboot, I'm back at 60Hz. What can be done for a problem like this?

Jim Wood

A Fast Write is part of the AGP4x specification. Turn it on and instructions are sent to your video card from the CPU using the most direct route, bypassing system RAM and boosting performance significantly. So yes, you want this enabled. As for the refresh problem, I have a Windows 2000 machine here with an ATI Rage card in it that exhibited the precise same problem. Set it high, reboot, and although

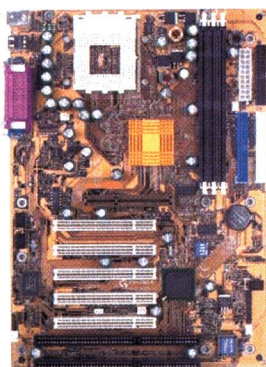
Windows proudly said 80Hz, the monitor reported 60Hz. First set your system to use Standard VGA drivers. Right-click on your desktop, click the Settings tab and then Advanced. Click Adapter and press Change. Reboot. Now reinstall with the latest Detonator drivers from www.nvidia.com and let me know if it's OK.

MAX POWER

Q I am thinking of upgrading my CPU, but I'm unsure what is the fastest speed my board can handle. The motherboard is a GA-7IXE4. Can you help?

Paul

A The Gigabyte GA-7IXE4 specifications state: "Socket A for AMD-K7 Athlon and Duron 200MHz FSB processors." Which means: "Supports Duron and Thunderbird Socket-A CPUs up to 1GHz." Make sure you're running the latest version of the AMD BIOS, released in February. You can download it from www.gigabyte.com.tw/support/swamd.htm.



AMD owe increasing market dominance to entry-level, low-price boards like the GA-7IXE4.

WHICH OS?

Q I've recently been reading replies from letters on these

pages saying that the problem with many PCs is the operating system – chiefly Windows 98. I have Windows 98 and I've been having numerous problems with system crashes, mostly when playing games. I was wondering if there's anything that will improve the reliability and performance of my computer? I'm eager to find out because I would love a computer that doesn't crash every ten minutes. I have a Pentium III 700MHz processor, a 20Gb hard disk, 192Mb RAM, and a GeForce2 graphics card. I've recently noticed that my latest games, such as *Medal Of Honor* and *Steel Soldiers*, are rather 'choppy' and don't perform so well. I'm guessing that I'll have to upgrade my PC. If this is so, what should I replace or upgrade to?

Dillon

A Performance wise, your machine isn't anything to get excited about, but it should run games like *Half-Life*, *Medal Of Honor* and *Steel Soldiers* without lapsing into cardiac arrest. It sounds all too easy to blame the operating system in cases where things are sluggish, but it's so often the case. An old install of Windows 98 will be simply atrocious in terms of speed and reliability, often thrashing around when you do something innocuous like open the Start menu or right-click on a folder. In these circumstances the best thing you can do for your long-term sanity is to update to Windows 2000 or to Windows XP Home Edition. I'm no fan of XP, and reserve it for testing purposes only, but it is cheaper than 2000. People find it hard to believe, but my primary machine remains a dual 500MHz Pentium III running NT 4.0 SP6. It is the most reliable PC I own, shading every other for all-round hardness and durability. Alas, you won't want NT as an increasing number of games require DirectX 8 or

above – *Jedi Knight II*, for example – and NT simply doesn't support it.

BROADBAND LAN

Q I've recently had NTL Broadband installed in my home. I also have a home LAN for my son. NTL tells me I'll need a second network card. Why can't I just plug in their box to my LAN hub? If I do buy a new card, can I access the broadband from the other PC?

Mike

A What you need is a cable router. I've heard many good reports about Netgear products, so have a look at www.netgear.com and follow the links to the section on cable and DSL routers. Essentially these products allow users such as yourself and your son to 'share' your



Netgear Model RP114, ideal for small LANs with small children.

Internet access across a home LAN. As well as connecting up to four individual PCs, the Netgear Model RP114 also offers parental control of web browsing – something you may wish to consider.

TUBBIE DEFENDER

Q I felt I had to write after reading your comments on Windows XP in issue 114. You don't like the Windows For Teletubbies look? Me either, which is why I set it to use the Windows Classic interface. You can certainly turn off the eye candy once it's installed. While XP Home might not be the operating system for business, XP Professional definitely is. Speaking as someone who

installs it in business networks as part of their job I can report that its stability and security features are in a different league to anything pre-Windows 2000. There are definite question marks over its current suitability as a gaming OS – driver support isn't all there yet, and it has patchy compatibility with older DOS titles. But I certainly wouldn't recommend Windows NT as an alternative, as that is NOT not a gaming OS, and is no stranger to huge patches either since you raised the subject. In short, if you don't want to go the Windows XP route then stick with Windows 98 SE. When that becomes unsupported by Microsoft, then you'd be mad to touch anything except XP Home as a game OS. Thanks for the heads-up on The All-Seeing Eye, it certainly beats the hell out of GameSpy. One disadvantage with it at the moment is that it doesn't seem to work through web proxies.

Anon

A I don't think I've ever recommended Windows NT as a gaming platform, chiefly because it isn't. I use it for work, I use it for *Team Fortress*, but I do understand its limitations. With regard to XP, for me it was identical to every other Microsoft upgrade: plagued with problems, missing vital drivers, full of bizarre incompatibilities and wouldn't shut down cleanly. Then there were 18Mb of updates waiting for me on the day of its release, followed by an alarming buffer overflow bug that could allow a determined hacker to shag my network senseless with UPnP traffic. Microsoft has recently claimed that it will release an all-new version of Windows, codename Longhorn, some time in 2004. Still full of holes, still missing drivers, XP is about to be replaced. Hah. ☹



WATCHDOG

Another month, another posse of angry readers needing help with their consumer woes. And, as always, we're more than happy to oblige...

■ WRITING THE WRONGS Adam Phillips

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry – we're here to help when you've reached the end of your tether. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JD

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog'

READ ME!

If you are writing into complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

BROADBAND? WHAT BROADBAND?

If you're a hardcore PC gamer, then it's mandatory you have broadband installed. And that's why we assume John McQuillan signed up with blueyonder on February 23 and arranged an installation date: "We were told their engineers would be around on March 12 between 2-6pm," explains John. "We were planning to go out on that day because it was my brother's birthday but cancelled because of the engineers coming to install the broadband line."

The engineers didn't turn up though. A phone call later and it turned out that someone at blueyonder had put in April 12 instead of March 12. John was then asked to phone the next day to rearrange an earlier installation date. Unfortunately, the next day, he was told that there was no space left and he would have to wait another month. Understandably, John was a tad hacked off considering it was their mistake and the installation service costs £62.50.

Watchdog contacted Chad Raube, the head of Internet services at blueyonder who made the following statement: "We are disappointed that, on this occasion, we have not met the high standards we set ourselves. We apologise to Mr McQuillan for the difficulties he has experienced with the installation of our broadband Internet service. We have since contacted Mr McQuillan and, in recognition of the inconvenience caused, have offered him suitable compensation." See you on the PC ZONE servers, John...

VIDEO NASTY

Imagine it. *Medal Of Honor* sitting there on your desk. And you can't play it because your graphics card has packed in and the company who you bought it from is seemingly playing silly buggers. Enter Mark Hammond who bought an Elsa graphics card from Dabs, only for the

whole thing to subsequently go pear-shaped.

He first contacted Elsa directly and they informed him that he needed to return it to Dabs who should be able to send him a replacement card because the fault had developed under warranty. After queuing for an age on Dabs's phone system, someone eventually took his call. "I was greeted with contempt when I explained what Elsa had told me – that I would be able to expect a new replacement," recalls Mark. "I was told: 'We have to forward the faulty item to Elsa in Germany.' I was also told that I had to use their online returns forms to send back my faulty goods. Although not happy with this arrangement, I conceded to their request."

After getting a returns number, Mark sent off the card by Securicor. "I waited for six weeks to no avail and with no explanation as to what was going on. I sent Dabs a deadline which was ignored so I've sent it again stating that they must reply." It's at this point that Mark turned to us to help him get his GF3 card back.

Dabs got back to Watchdog quickly: "Since we no longer sell the Elsa line of graphics cards, it would not be possible for us to arrange a replacement from stock as the representative from Elsa had advised. In order to replace the card in this situation, it

would mean waiting for stock to arrive from Elsa Germany, hence a four-to-six week lead time was stated."

They continued: "For all returns within the warranty period, we would normally only directly replace from stock if this is the agreement we have with the distributor/manufacturer in question. Otherwise, our normal procedure is to send the item for repair or replacement via the manufacturer."

Given the specific nature of your situation, Mark, and the fact that they no longer sell the Elsa range, they are happy to offer a replacement from an alternative manufacturer or alternatively process a refund. They also apologise for any inconvenience. So by the time you read this, you should be playing *Medal Of Honor*. Do let us know if you aren't...

A TINY PROBLEM...

Ah, the legacy of Tiny continues. Martin Wise and Ashleigh Eaton ordered a Tiny computer on February 2 2002. It finally turned up after 12 days where it was left on their doorstep. Martin plugged it in and switched the PC on. Ahh, it didn't work. Oops. He phoned customer services and they arranged a pick-up on February 19.

He phoned customer services the following Monday and was (eventually) told that the

computer would be returned on Friday March 1. Come Friday and there was no sign of his beloved PC. After demanding to speak to a manager, he was given another assurance that the computer would arrive shortly but it failed to materialise...

So Martin phoned the shop he bought it from and demanded that they find out what was going on. The store got back to him saying that the fixed PC would touch down by Friday March 8. Err, nope, no sign of the PC then either.

Poor old Martin then stomped along to the shop in person on March 11. The manager was helpful but even after his investigations, he couldn't come up with a definite return date. So Martin's sitting there without a computer.

Now as we know, the old Tiny has recently gone down the pan. However, Time Computers meanwhile has stepped in and bought them up. So we contacted Time to find out where Martin's PC had got to.

"Mr Wise, please accept our apologies," came back the company's response. "We take customer care very seriously, and consistently aim to better the support we offer. With regards to your specific problem, I'm very sorry that it has taken so long to resolve. This is not our normal service and we have been repairing and returning thousands of faulty Tiny PCs since the merger of Time and Tiny at the end of January."

According to Time, your computer has been returned now and the problems sorted. Why did it take so long to sort out, though? "Unfortunately, your PC took so long to be returned due to the large backlog of faulty PCs caused by the mess created by the previous Tiny management," is the official response. "It was unfortunate that your PC was caught up in the mass influx of PCs that were returned to our service centre."

THE ACCUSED



dabs
com

blueyonder
Internet services

SCAN
scan computers international ltd.

PC WORLD
The Computer Superstore

GUILTY UNTIL
PROVEN INNOCENT



Medic? Mark Hammond would just like his graphics card back from Dabs please.

"To add insult to injury, the printer had only printed 77 sheets and two photo-paper prints"

In the meantime, in recognition of the poor service you have received, Time would like to offer you compensation in the form of the software package **Worksuite 2002 (worth £49.99)** which includes Encarta and Auto Route. They will also be resetting your warranty. That's more like it...

PRINTER PROBS

We received a letter from a distraught reader about his Epson Stylus 760 printer that he bought from PC World. Mr R Stokes bought it on August 28 2000. "It always seemed to perform perfectly when I needed it until September 26 2001, when it crashed and burned," explains Stokes. "I have no idea what happened but the computer threw up a message telling me that the printer was jammed." After poking round the printer, he still couldn't get it working. To his horror, Stokes realised that the guarantee had expired by less than a month as well. To add insult to injury, the printer had only printed 77 sheets and two photo-paper prints.

He went along to the store and was told to write to their head office.

"The first letter from them was less than forthcoming," says Stokes. "Telling me they couldn't offer a repair, they invited me to go to a VAT-registered repair centre and obtain a report detailing the fault. If I submit said report, they may consider contributing towards a repair."

So Stokes went to his local computer store who provided him with a report and an estimate. Off the record, he was told that repairing the printer would cost more than the printer was worth. He sent off the report to PC World: "What they sent back to me I considered an insult," fumes Stokes.

He was told that the report was insufficient and was asked to get another one detailing the exact fault and cost to repair. Stokes deemed this

unacceptable and contacted Epson for their advice - they simply offered him a number for a repair agency and some free ink cartridges if he managed to get the wretched thing working again.

So Stokes is stuck with a barely used printer and no way of getting it fixed it would seem. What does PC World have to say for itself?

"Unfortunately, in this instance we cannot resolve Mr Stokes' problem without a more detailed report from an engineer with an exact cost for the repair," explains a spokesperson for the company. "The report



Seventy-seven pages and Mr Stokes' printer is knackered.

supplied so far is too vague and only provides an estimate of the cost."

They say that in all instances when a product is outside of the manufacturer's warranty, "we ask for an engineer's report to be submitted to enable us to establish what the fault is, and if we can offer the customer a contribution towards rectifying the problem." They go on: "We would like to take this opportunity to apologise for the inconvenience caused to Mr Stokes and reassure you that the problem he had with this product was an isolated incident." Looks like Stokes is going to have to get another report. It sounds like PC World is nit-picking to us. **PCW**



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- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>A = 01
 Actua Soccer
 Age of Empires 1 & 2
 Age of Wonder
 Airport Inc
 Alien vs Predator 1 & 2
 Alliances (Imp. Galactica 2)
 Arcanum
 Army Men 1 & 2
 Army Men: Air Tactics
 Army Men: World War
 Atlantis</p> <p>B = 02
 Baldur's Gate 1 & 2
 Battle for Naboo
 Battle Realms
 Black & White
 Black & White: Creature Isle
 Black Dahlia
 Blade Runner
 Braveheart
 Broken Sword 1 & 2</p> <p>C = 03
 C & C: Red Alert 1, 2 & Y's Rev.
 C & C: Tiberian Sun
 C & C: Renegade
 Caesar 1, 2 & 3
 Carmageddon 2
 Champ Man. 3,98,99, 00&01
 Civilization 3
 Close Combat 3
 Codename: Outbreak
 Colin McRae Rally 1 & 2
 Comanche 4
 Command & Conquer
 Commandos 1 & 2
 Construtor
 Cossacks: The Art of War
 Cossacks: European Wars
 Crimson Skies
 Curse of Monkey Island
 Cutthroats</p> <p>D = 04
 Dark Age of Camelot
 Delta Force 1, 2 & Land War.
 Desperados
 Deus Ex
 Diablo 1 & 2
 Disworld Noir
 Doom
 Dracula Last Sanctuary
 Driver
 Duke Nukem 3D
 Dune 2000
 Dungeon Keeper 1 & 2
 Dungeon Siege</p> <p>E = 05
 Earthworm Jim
 Emperor - Battle for Dune
 Empire Earth
 Escape Monkey Island</p> <p>F = 06
 FA PLGue Fball Man. 00,01&02
 Fallout 2
 Fate of the Dragon
 FIFA 2000, 2001 & 2002
 Final Doom
 Final Fantasy 8
 Flight Unlimited 2</p> <p>G = 07
 Gangsters 1 & 2
 Ghost Recon
 Grand Prix Manager 2
 Grand Theft Auto 1, 2 & 3
 Grim Fandango
 GTA: London 1969
 Gunman Chronicles</p> <p>H = 08
 Half Life
 Half Life: Blue Shift
 Half Life: Opposing Force
 Harry Potter
 Heist</p> | <p>Heretic
 Heroes of Might & Magic 3 & 4
 Hidden & Dangerous
 Hitman
 Hogs of War
 Homeworld
 Hooligans - Storm Over Europe
 Hostile Waters</p> <p>I = 09
 I. Dale: Heart of Winter
 I. Jones: Infernal Machine
 Ice Wind Dale
 Insane</p> <p>J = 10
 Jagged Alliance 2
 Jedi Knight 1 & 2
 Jedi Knight: Myst. of Sith</p> <p>K = 11
 Kingdom Under Fire
 Kingpin</p> <p>L = 12
 Lego Racers
 Links 2001
 Little Big Adventure 2
 London Racer
 Lord of the Realm 2</p> <p>M = 13
 M&M: Mandate of Heaven
 Master of Olympus
 Mat Hoffman's BMX
 Max Payne
 MDK 1 & 2
 Mech Commander 1 & 2
 Medal of Honor: All. Assault
 Men in Black
 Metal Gear Solid
 Microsoft Train Simulator
 Midtown Madness 1 & 2
 Might & Magic 7
 Monkey Island 1, 2, 3 & 4
 Monopoly Tycoon
 Moto Racer 3
 Myst 1, 2 & 3</p> <p>N = 14
 Necronomicon
 Need for Speed 3, 4 & 5
 No One Lives Forever
 Nox</p> <p>O = 15
 Oni
 Operation Flashpoint</p> <p>P = 16
 Pharaoh
 Populous the Beginning
 Premier Manager 99
 Project IGI</p> <p>R = 18
 Railroad Tycoon 2
 Rainbow Six
 Rally Championship '00 & Extr.
 Rayman 2
 Red Faction
 Resident Evil 1, 2 & 3
 Return to Castle Wolfenstein
 Robot Wars
 Rogue Spear
 Rogue Squadron
 Roller Coaster Tycoon
 Rugby 2001</p> <p>S = 19
 S. Wars: Force Comm.
 Seadogs
 Serious Sam 1 & 2
 Settlers 1, 2, 3 & 4
 Severance: Blade of Darkness
 Shogun: Total War
 Silver</p> <p>Sim City 2000 & 3000
 Sim Golf
 Sims
 Sims Hot Date
 Sims House Party
 Sims on Holiday
 Sims Livin' It Up</p> | <p>Soldier of Fortune
 Spiderman
 Sports Car GT
 Star Trek: Armada 1 & 2
 Star Trek: Birth of Fed.
 Star Trek: Bridge Commander
 Star Trek: DS9 Dominion Wars
 Star Trek: Elite Forces
 Star Wars Racer
 Star Wars X-Wing
 Star Wars: Galactic B'ground
 Star Wars: Jedi Knight 1 & 2
 Star Wars: Phantom M.
 Star Wars: Rogue Squadron
 Star Wars: Shadows of the Emp.
 StarCraft
 Star Fleet Academy
 Sting! Streets Of Sim City
 Stranglehold
 Sudden Strike
 Swat 3</p> <p>T = 20
 Theme Hospital
 Theme Park
 Theme Park Inc
 Theme Park World
 Thief: Dark Project
 Tiberian Sun
 Tomb Raider 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5
 Traffic Giant
 Transport Tycoon
 Tropico</p> <p>U = 21
 Ultimate Soccer Manager 98</p> <p>V = 22
 VR Powerboat Racing</p> <p>W = 23
 Warcraft 2
 Warhammer: Dark Omen
 Warlords 3
 Warrior Kings
 Warzone 2100
 Wolfenstein 3D
 World Cup 98</p> <p>Z = 26
 Zeus: Master of Olympus
 Zoo Tycoon</p> |
|---|---|--|



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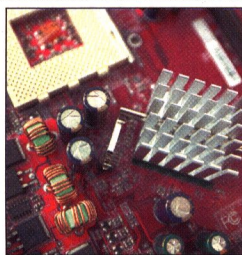
BUYER'S GUIDE

Are you looking to upgrade your PC? Since we've started this Buyer's Guide, prices have dropped consistently every month – and we'll keep on checking to ensure that this guide gives you the most accurate and up-to-date information. While we're on the subject, memory is dirt cheap as well – if you're still labouring with less than 128Mb RAM, buy some now

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MOTHERBOARD



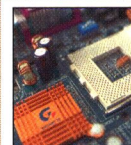
MSI K7N420 PRO

STREET PRICE £102 inc VAT
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MANUFACTURER MicroStar International
WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

The Asus A7V266-E just gets edged off its deserved plinth by a motherboard featuring the NVIDIA nForce 420D chipset. In testing, the board showed superb performance in the crucial OpenGL and DirectX 8.1 tests. It has a number of optional extras, so check with the retailer about what to expect in the box you buy – integrated LAN, additional USB slots, TV out and digital audio out are all available. Bear in mind that if you have an old video card, you may not need a new one with this board – it has a GeForce 2 MX class GPU integrated into the Northbridge... for free! Bit of a bonus...

WAS £122
NOW £102



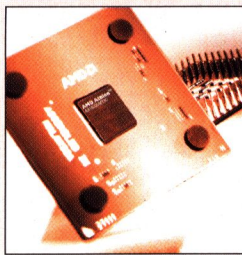
GIGABYTE GA-7VTXH

STREET PRICE £87 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE 01908 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

Usurps another great Gigabyte board – this one is a great Via KT266A-based DDR solution. Integrated are both 10/100 LAN and four-channel audio from Creative. In testing it proved stable and among the faster DDR boards for Athlon. A complete bargain.

WAS £90
NOW £87

PROCESSOR



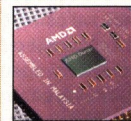
AMD ATHLON XP 1900+

STREET PRICE £134 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A

MANUFACTURER AMD
WEBSITE www.amd.com

The Athlon XP processors are named after the clockspeed of Intel processors it claims to beat. The 1900+ actually runs at a clockspeed of 1.6GHz, and with new so-called QuantiSpeed architecture, more on-chip cache and souped-up 3DNow! instruction set, it offers superb performance in a range of applications – not least games. While the 2100 is currently the fastest processor in the range, the 1900+ is good value for money. Ensure your Socket A motherboard has an updated BIOS and correctly rated components to run an XP processor before you fork out.

WAS £114
NOW £105



DURON 1.3 GHz

STREET PRICE £86
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it a top processor for gamers.

WAS £90
NOW £86

HARD DRIVE



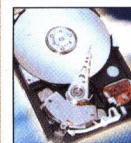
SEAGATE BARRACUDA ATA IV 60GB

STREET PRICE £89 inc VAT
TELEPHONE 01628 890 366

MANUFACTURER Seagate
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

We have a new Best Buy hard drive – the 60Gb Seagate Barracuda ATA IV. The IBM Deskstar 75GXP drives are looking a bit long in the tooth alongside this modern beastie. Although it's a 7,200 RPM drive, it runs both cooler and quieter than its peers, which can only be a good thing. Fully loaded with a 2Mb cache, the performance is solid across the board, both in terms of average seek times and sustained data throughput. We recommend the 60Gb drive on the basis that it seems pretty good value for money, though the range also offers 20, 40 and 80Gb variants.

WAS £95
NOW £89



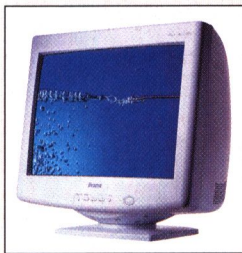
SEAGATE U SERIES 6 40GB

STREET PRICE £65 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

The U Series 5 drives are now pretty much unavailable, but is replaced in the Buyer's Guide by its own replacement. The U Series 6 drive has much the same spec as the Series 5, but runs quieter and cooler. We've also uprated capacity to 40Gb – great value.

WAS £70
NOW £65

MONITOR



IYYAMA VM PRO 512 22IN

STREET PRICE £633
TELEPHONE 01438 745482

MANUFACTURER Iiyama
WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk

Our long-standing Best Buy monitor, the VM Pro 510, is superseded by the 512. Equipped with the latest Mitsubishi aperture grille Diamondtron screen, it has a rather smaller viewable area than suggested, closer to 20 inches than 22, but gives outstanding results at resolutions up to 2048x1536 at 85Hz – something many graphics cards can't even support. If your video card has the bandwidth, you can rely on this monitor to give you pin-sharp results at 1600x1200. There's also the useful inclusion of a four-port USB hub as well as a pair of speakers – even if they do sound a bit tinny.

WAS £751
NOW £633



HANSOL 710P 17IN

STREET PRICE £135 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE 01252 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer, Hansol is a company well worth a look. With a fabulously low price, it will handle 1024x768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600x1200 at a creditable 75Hz. There's not a lot that'll touch this for the money.

WAS £151
NOW £135

GRAPHICS CARD



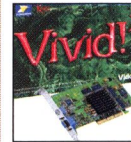
VISIONTEK XTASY GEFORCE 4 TI4600

STREET PRICE £323 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A

MANUFACTURER VisionTek
WEBSITE www.visiontek.com/uk

We've just had the first batch of GeForce 4 cards cross the PC ZONE bench, and we have a new high-end winner – though it's gonna cost you an arm and a leg for the time being. Move over GeForce 3 Ti500 – here comes the GeForce 4 Titanium 4600, supplied by VisionTek. The clever memory architecture of the GeForce 4 Titanium processor, coupled with 650MHz DDR memory, gives this card bandwidth fearsome enough to cope with FSAA, as well as high resolutions – at blistering frame-rates. It's faster than Radeon, faster than GeForce 3. It even blows Xbox out of the water. Price shown is a conversion of the Euro RRP; no street price is available yet.

WAS £395
NOW £323



VIDEOLOGIC VIVID!XS 32MB

STREET PRICE £71 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Videologic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com

The new Kyro II chipset blows its slower Kyro brethren to smithereens at 175MHz clock speed. The 32Mb Vivid!XS replaces the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 as Best Budget Buy – but only just, there's barely anything to choose between the two.

WAS £85
NOW £71

BEST BUDGET



HERCULES GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II

STREET PRICE £36 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE (020) 8686 5600
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

This four-channel audio card represents excellent value for money and its DirectSound 3D support is gib-tastic. You can even get four channels of surround sound from your DVD movies with a special version of PowerDVD!



MICROSOFT GAMEVOICE USB

STREET PRICE £49.99 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

So how can a set of budget headphones cost more than our Best Buy? It's simple really – the GameVoice enables you to talk to your mates over the Internet. It works very well, and as they double as a more than decent set of headphones, they're a bit of a bargain.



YAMAHA CRW3200E-VK

STREET PRICE £112
MANUFACTURER Yamaha
TELEPHONE N/A **WEBSITE:** www.yamaha-it.de

Yamaha make great CD-RW drives, and the 3200 is the company's current range topper – despite its keen price. We love its AudioMaster burning mode for high-quality audio CD burning, but it also shares most of the features of the Plector, but at a lower price. It's not that much slower either – a veritable bargain.



SAITEK CYBORG 3D GOLD

STREET PRICE £30
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com

Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both strong and adjustable – even the left-handed are catered for – and its response and accuracy can only be described as unequalled.



SIDEWINDER PLUG 'N' PLAY

STREET PRICE £12
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

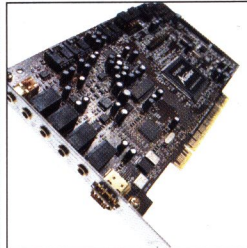
Four buttons, two triggers, directional pad, USB. Dead simple, dead effective and really rather cheap. The Plug 'n' Play Gamepad is the new basic controller from the Seattle Sidewinders and comes in funky transparent plastic, in contrast to the gloomy black pads of yesteryear.



HERCULES XPS210

STREET PRICE £40 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

This small but perfectly formed 2.1 speaker set is cheap – but doesn't sound it. With tone controls and stereo enhancement, it's an ideal solution for desktop gaming. The satellites and subwoofer are well matched, giving a decent overall sound. And adorned in royal blue, it looks the part too...



CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY PLAYER

STREET PRICE £79 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
WEBSITE www.europe.creative.com

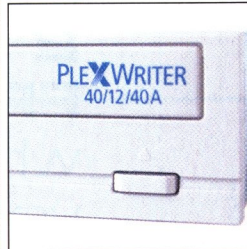
The SonicFury gets pipped to the post by the excellent new Audigy Player from Creative Labs. Successor to the very successful Sound Blaster Live! series, the Audigy has an audio engine four times as powerful, excellent audio quality, and a range of features that makes it the most versatile all-round gaming/music/DVD soundcard. EAX Advanced HD adds a range of new 3D audio features, though it'll be a while before games filter through with support for the more esoteric options. It's about £20 more expensive than its main competition, but we reckon it's well worth it.



SENNHEISER HD 200 MASTER

STREET PRICE £45
TELEPHONE 01494 551 551
MANUFACTURER Sennheiser
WEBSITE www.sennheiser.co.uk

This German audio company has been around for more than 50 years, founded by the suitably Teutonic-sounding Dr Fritz Sennheiser. The HD200s are actually targeted at DJs, and for good reason. They're very, very loud. They're very, very strong. They have a closed back design, meaning you can hear nearby rocket jumpers comfortably while her indoors has *EastEnders* turned up high enough so she can hear it from the kitchen. And, crucially for extended gaming sessions, they're comfortable and light, weighing around 140g. A great pair of cans at a top price – what you waiting for?



PLEXTOR PX-W4012TA

STREET PRICE £138
TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522
MANUFACTURER Plector
WEBSITE www.plector.com

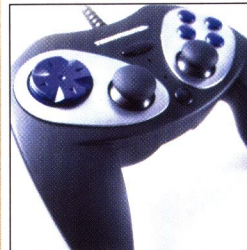
Plector once again take top honours with a superfast 40x Write, 12x ReWrite and 40x Read drive. No matter what task you throw at it, it simply zips along, and BURN-Proof technology stops buffer underruns (where the data flow from the burner's cache to the burner is interrupted) from rendering the drive a coffee placemat machine. Particularly nifty is its PowerRec II technology which analyses the quality of the blank media being used and adjusts the write speed downwards if necessary. All in all, we reckon this is the best drive out there – and it's shipped with Nero 5, another major bonus.



MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCEFEEDBACK 2

STREET PRICE £62 inc VAT
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/sidewinder/sidewinder.htm

Force-feedback products aren't everyone's cup of tea, but nothing comes close to the SideWinder FF2. It's a huge, heavy tabletop affair, with the power transformer built into the base. An infrared sensor causes the stick to leap to attention when you grasp it, which might be a bit startling, but is still rather good. The force-feedback routines work extremely well – mainly because the motors are so powerful. If more games made better use of the technology, it would be a must-have piece of gear.



THRUSTMASTER FIRESTORM DUAL-POWER GAMEPAD

STREET PRICE £26
TELEPHONE (020) 8686 5600
MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

We may not be that fond of Thrustmaster's joysticks, but this force feedback joypad and its non-force feedback cousin, the Firestorm Dual Analogue, are superbly designed. The Firestorm Dual Power sports no fewer than 13 control buttons, not to mention the twin analogue directional hats. As a result, it's one of the most versatile controllers on the market, equally at home with arcade-style games that need digital pads or flight sims requiring more progressive analogue control. Also included is Thrustmapper software that allows you to customise its behaviour in any game. Delicious, especially at this price.



KLIPSCH PROMEDIA 4.1

STREET PRICE £299
MANUFACTURER Klipsch
TELEPHONE 0031 314 383 699
WEBSITE www.klipsch.com

Take your pick for Best Buy between the stunning Klipsch 4.1 THX-approved speakers and the cheaper long-term favourites Sirocco Crossfire from Videologic. Both represent great value for money, but the Klipsch edges it in the listenability stakes, hence their new entry here. They're beautifully made, sound amazing and are the first speakers that can split your ears just as well as the Crossfires. You'll find no better speaker set-up for watching DVDs and playing games on PC.

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Playable demos of the top 10 games, according to the PC Zone TOP 100

- Championship Manager 01/02
- Operation Flashpoint
- Deus Ex
- Severance: Blade of Darkness
- Colin McRae Rally 2.0
- Half-Life: Uplink
- Z: Steel Soldiers
- Zeus: Master of Olympus
- Battle of Britain
- Terminus

EXTENDED PLAY EXTRA

Over 6 months' worth of Extended Play patches and add-ons, so you can get more from your favourites. Featuring extras for **Black & White**, **Unreal Tournament**, **The Sims** and many, many more. PLUS the top 5 Modwatch files over the past year, including **Wanted! The Half-Life Western Pack** - YEEEEEEEE-HAW!

All gifts subject to availability. Allow 28 days for delivery. Please note that Windows 95 is required for most programs on the FREE CD ROMs and that most of them have limited functionality.



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EXTENDED PLAY

Finishing a game is only the beginning in Extended Play. Maps, mods, add-ons and extras are all here to help you get the most out of your games

MY LIFE IN AN AIRPORT



■ **FLYING HIGH** Rhianna Pratchett

▲ I am writing this column while trying desperately to recover from severe jetlag, having just arrived back from Canada after checking out the very tasty *Neverwinter Nights* (page 52). "Oh the glamorous life of a journalist", I'm frequently told, "you get to travel, see the world". Bollocks. As any journalist, aside from actual travel writers will tell you, when you travel in a job it doesn't mean you see a lot of the world, it actually means you see a whole lot of airports. You also get to see a lot of the inside of taxis and I can now identify a car air freshener at 20 paces... ahhh, is that lemon zinger I can smell?

This month I'd like to draw your attention to our wonderful shiny CD pages, primarily because we've got some cracking exclusive demos in the form of *Divine Divinity*, *Dungeon Siege* and *Team Factor* but also to pay homage to the lovely people that put your monthly discs together. They are residents of the mysteriously titled EPU (Electronic Publishing Unit... we think) with whom we swap numerous emails and scraps of paper and who more importantly poke and prod your discs into perfection. So James, Mark, Luke, Lee, Cecil and Sarah, we salute you.

Medal with the best

ON THE **CD DVD** The official SDK for *Medal Of Honor* is here. We shall meet you on the beaches

■ www.planetmedalofhonor.com ■ <http://www.qeradiant.com/manual/>
■ <http://www.alliedassault.com/community/guides/BitsnCK/>



So you think you can do better than the *Omaha Beach* level?

THE LEVEL EDITING tools for *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* may have taken a long time to get to us, but they've finally arrived this month battered and bullet ridden. Those who have already gotten to grips with the *Return To Castle Wolfenstein SDK* will find it much easier to get to use the *Medal Of Honor* tools, as they're both based around the Radiant editor. This particular editor is notoriously hard to get to grips with, so for some good advice on taming the beast check out the link above for a complete guide.

As well as the tools you'll also find a test map and a document to help you with the basic script for the levels. If you still have no idea what you're doing then take a look at our third link for a step-by-step guide to creating PAK Mods. In order to keep your *Medal Of Honor* mood ticking along nicely we've



included some brand new skins from the MoH community and the folk at planetmedalofhonor.com. Although they're not strictly skins in the normal skin sense, JamesBondage's Allied Cammo skins (which you'll find on this month's CD and DVD) covers all the game's weapons from the colt to the bazooka

with an attractive array of camouflage patterns. Great for those leafier maps.

If you want to add a bit of character to your mods we've also included skins for Rommel and Koenig (based on the character played by Ed Harris in *Enemy At The Gates*). Go forth and edit people. Your country needs you.



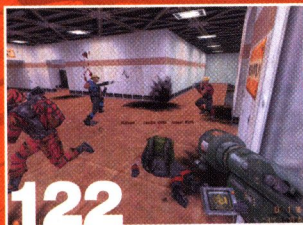
Now even your weapons are sneaky.

CHEATS AHoy!

When we dropped CheatMaster from our Extended Play pages we had a lot of letters of complaint, but you'll be happy to hear that we have now incorporated loads of cheats onto your cover disc. Just click on CheatStation in Extended Play for this month's goodies, including cheats for *Dungeon Siege*,

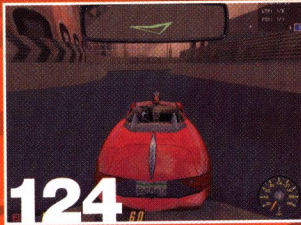
Heroes Of Might And Magic IV, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3*, *Stronghold*, *Star Trek: Bridge Commander*, *Europa Universalis II*, *Gothic* and *Etherlords*. If none of this lot appeals to you then you can get more than 40,000 cheats online at www.pczone.co.uk.





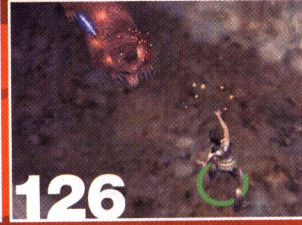
122 THE GUIDE

How to set-up a Half-Life server



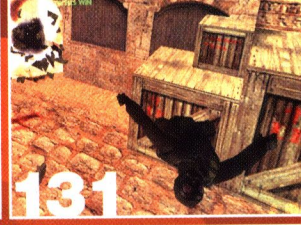
124 THE MODSQUAD

Parkas at the ready...



126 DISC PAGES

Play the latest demos



131 FIGHT CLUB

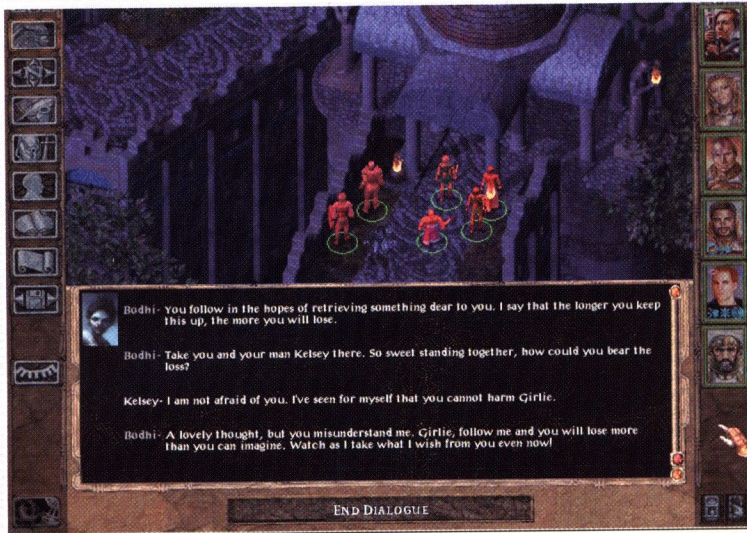
Come and 'ave a go...

Love is in the air

ON THE CD & DVD ■ www.forgottenwars.net/kelsey/ ■ www3.sympatico.ca/sentinelsx/

EVERYONE DESERVES a bit of affection now and then, even if they are computer game characters. And romances are one of the enduring aspects of *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn* and a feature Bioware are continuing with *Neverwinter Nights*. After eight month's of hard graft *The Forgotten Wars* team have come up with a saucy little NPC, a human male sorcerer named Kelsey who's all set to magic himself into a compromising situation with your lead female character.

Kelsey shares with the main character the fear and isolation of being different, which draws them together and may threaten to break them apart just as easily. But male characters needn't feel left out thanks to Michael 'Arian' Lyashenko bringing them a bit of lurvin' action in the form of Tashia, an elven sorceress for *BGII* and *The Throne Of Bhaal*. You'll find Tashia on both the CDs and DVD only. We promise we will squeeze him onto the CDs next month

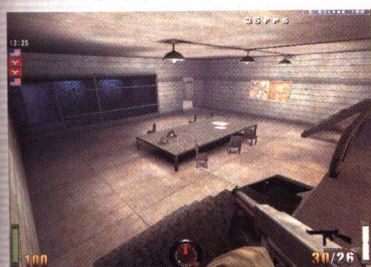


Kelsey is a troubled young man, but isn't everyone in *Baldur's Gate*?

Return To Castle Wolfenstein

■ www.rtcwfiles.com

ON THE CD & DVD **SINCE THE** release of the *Return To Castle Wolfenstein SDK* the Wolf extras have come thick and fast and this month we're bringing you 12 new maps on the CD and DVD and a further eight maps exclusively on the DVD. Some of the most notable include the multiplayer deathmatch/CP map 'snow' which is a variant of the famous *Counter-Strike* 'dust' map and *Axis Complex* multiplayer map where the Allies have to infiltrate the Axis base to steal some secret military papers. And as in all good action adventures, the air ducts will play a crucial part in sneaking around the base.

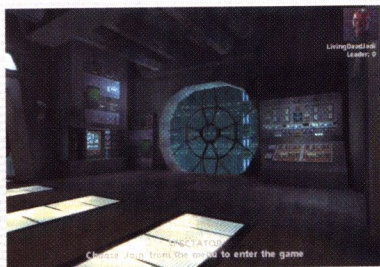


Surely they wouldn't leave secret papers just lying around, would they?

Jedi Knight II

■ www.jk2files.com/

ON THE CD & DVD **THE RADIANT** editor is working overtime this month, as it's also being shipped with the official editing tools for *Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast*. This SDK contains JK2Radiant, MD3View, Mod View Model Views, Shadered2 and the sof2map compiler. We've also included one of the first JKII maps, *The Ladder*, a single-player map that utilises almost all your Jedi powers to enable you to fight your way through wave after wave of the reborn. *The Carbon Freeze* multiplayer map which is also on our discs this month, is an adapted *Elite Forces* map, which will eventually be part of a much larger *Cloud City* map with a walk-in Millennium Falcon.

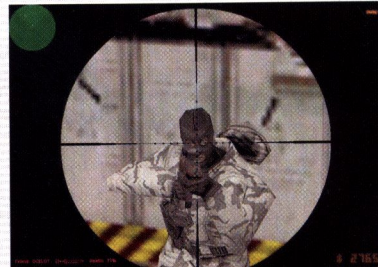


Sailing straight into the big blue in *Carbon Freeze*.

Half-Life & CS 1.4

■ www.planethalflife.com

ON THE CD & DVD **IT'S TIME** to upgrade both *Half-Life* and *Counter-Strike*... Again. The latest patches for both the retail and mod versions of *Counter-Strike* (1.4) contain added anti-cheat protection, mute options to ignore disruptive players and includes two lush maps, *cs_havana* and *de_chateau*, plus an update to *de_train*. Unfortunately, because of the size of the patches, we've only included the CS mod upgrade on the CD, but both the mod and retail versions are on the DVD. *Half-Life* 1.1.0.9 is on both discs and contains numerous bug fixes, including modifications to the Tau Cannon and Egon Gun. Install both and you should have no problems getting on your favourite servers.



Install patch. Go, go, go...

SHORTS

TOTAL SHOGUN



ON THE DVD This month we're helping you fill in your time before the release of *Medieval: Total War* with a bevy of *Shogun* and *Mongol Invasion* beauties. We've got everything from map packs and war campaigns to Mah Jong style tile games. We've also included four historical battles: *Shizugatake*, *Sekigahara*, *Anegawa* and *Ishibashiya*. Enjoy.

DESERT STORM



ON THE CD & DVD The new team-based siege and domination multiplayer modes for *Ghost Recon: Desert Siege* helped turn the game into one of the best team-based FPS challenges around. The latest patch corrects a multiplayer balancing issue, which was previously giving teams different stats at the start of a game. You can find it on this month's discs.

QUICK DEATH



ON THE CD & DVD *Quake III* fans can now get their version of *Unreal Tournament*'s popular *Insta-gib* mod in the form of *Quick Death 1.0*. The mod includes features such as timed poison death, haste and railshards to get enhanced railing abilities. The mod actually gives perks to the technically 'good' players, so skill really does matter.

FOXY BOT



The latest version of the ultra realistic *FoxyBot* (v0.695) for *Team Fortress Classic* and *Neo-TF* is now available. This new version is pretty stable and includes modifications such as engineer bots which defend bases, allowing players on home networks to get big *TFC* games going with only a small number of 'real' players.

HOW TO... SET UP YOUR OWN GAMES SERVER

Want to start fights rather than join existing ones? *Phil Wand* show you how easy it is to run your own *Half-Life* server



TFC is more gory than its rivals.



A typical scene from 2fort.

RUNNING A *Half-Life* server is far easier than you might imagine, and if you have the *Half-Life* game installed on your machine you already have everything you need. Everything bar willingness, a little patience, and a decent cup of tea. But before you go and get the kettle warmed up, a word of warning. Game servers are hungry beasts that need constant feeding. Unlike web traffic, which tends to arrive in fits and bursts, a server will suck and blow the whole time it's active – a home ADSL install will support ten players at most (even then, your ISP may decide to regulate the upstream bandwidth allocated to you in order to maintain a level of service elsewhere on the network). Which brings us to our second point – hardware. If you want to set up a non-stop, dedicated server, you really need to consider the computing power behind it. Because even a relatively decent Pentium III can be brought to its knees if you

try and squeeze too much from it in one go. Consider setting aside another PC for the job, or perhaps using a lesser machine for mundane tasks such as email. This way, you won't have to worry about the game getting the jitters when you're taking up processor time with other things.

DEDICATION'S WHAT YOU NEED

There are two types of server available to you, Listen and Dedicated – both provide the same experience to users. The Listen server is a regular session of *Half-Life* but with the game 'listening' for remote connections. You can start one of these servers by clicking the Create Game button from within *Half-Life* itself (note that you can be running any mod you like, from *Day Of Defeat* to *Sven Co-Op*), selecting a starting map, giving it a meaningful name

(consider that Team Fortress 1.5 won't pull in the punters the same way Strictly No French People! will, so use your imagination), and finally pressing OK. As long as you configured your router correctly (see boxout) and don't have a personal firewall like ZoneAlarm refusing connections on port 27015, it should work straight off. Anyone browsing for a server will be able to see it and join it until you close the game by pressing the Esc key and selecting Quit. If you're not sure it's visible to the world,

have a friend refresh their copy of The All-Seeing Eye or visit www.gametiger.net and search for it by name.

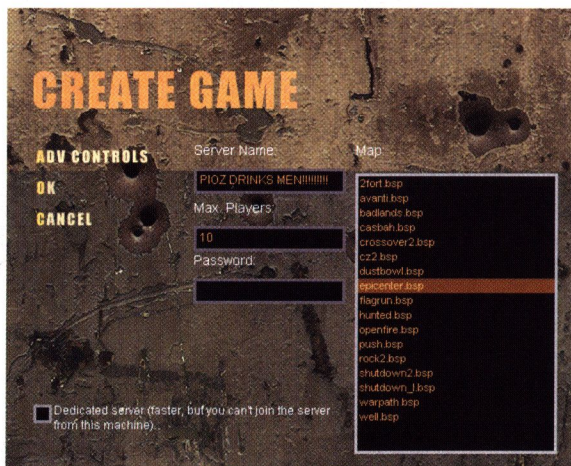
On the other hand, the Dedicated server provides a fire and forget solution for serving up 24/7 *Half-Life* straight from your Windows desktop. You don't get to play it and you can't see what's going on. It's a small, inoffensive, text-only 'console' application that runs in the background, silently responding to requests from players, changing maps at

preset intervals, and so on and so forth until you shut it down. And this is what we're going to set up right now.

TEAM WORK

For the purposes of this guide we'll be configuring a *Team Fortress Classic* server, although the process is almost exactly the same for *Counter-Strike*. Start by browsing to the *Half-Life* folder on your hard drive, and making sure you have a file called *hllds.exe*. That, ladies and gentlemen, is the *Half-Life* Dedicated Server, or plain HLDS to its friends. If it's missing, you'll need to reinstall your copy of the game from the CD, and if it's an old version you'll need to apply the relevant patches. Running an old copy of the game will work, but nobody with a later version will be able to join it.

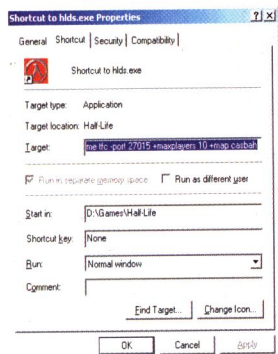
Now listen, before you succumb to the growing excitement and double-click to launch it, we need to configure it carefully. Select the icon and right-click drag to your desktop – when prompted, choose Create Shortcut Here from the menu. Next we'll edit the two main HLDS configuration



You can set up a Listen server using the *Half-Life* interface.

files – server.cfg and mapcycle.txt. Open the tfc folder and double-click server.cfg to open the file in Notepad. This is the file that your server loads each time it is started and at every map change, and for apprentice administrators the only variable you need to change is host-name. Look around a third of the way down and type whatever you want between the two quotes – this will be the name of your server as seen in millions of server browsers across the planet. Save and close the file.

Now, double-click on mapcycle.txt, which is used to determine the sequence of maps. When your server reaches its time limit (the



Changing the Half-Life Dedicated Server shortcut properties.

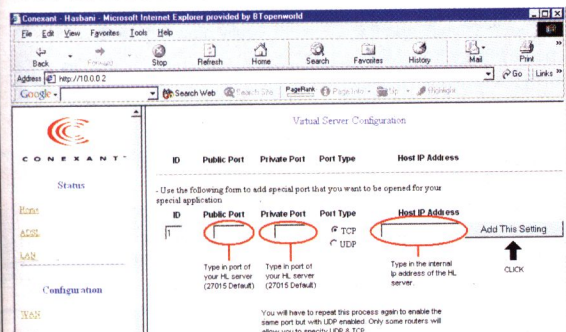
mp_timelimit variable in server.cfg, best left at 30 minutes), it progresses to the next map in the cycle. Unless you have a burning



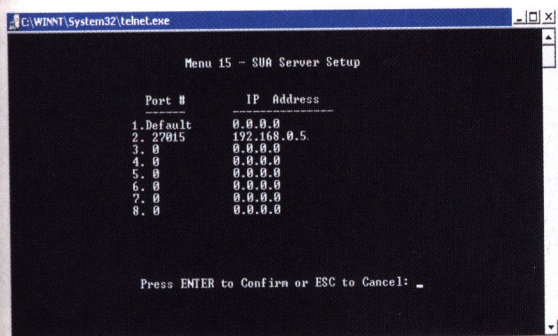
Helped by a Heavy Weapons guy, blue base takes a pounding.

ROUTE ME QUICK

IF YOU CONNECT TO YOUR CABLE OR ADSL LINE VIA A ROUTER YOU'LL NEED TO LET THE NETWORK KNOW WHICH PORT TO OPEN UP, OTHERWISE YOUR ROUTER WILL PREVENT YOU PLAYING. FOR OUR SERVER WE'LL BE USING HALF-LIFE'S DEFAULT PORT OF 27015



In the screen above we are using a web browser to configure a standard type ADSL router. In the Virtual Server Configuration section, add the port of the *Half-Life* server and then provide the internal IP address of the machine that hosts the games, typically 192.168.0.2 but this will be entirely dependent on your network configuration. If you're not sure what address the PC is configured to use, right-click on Network Neighbourhood on your desktop (renamed Network Places in later releases of Windows), open the TCP/IP properties and double-check the IP there. You could also open a DOS window and type IPCONFIG at the command prompt.



A very simple configuration utility similar to those seen in Netgear routers. Telnet to the address of your router by typing telnet <address>. Once the main screen is displayed, select menu option 15, SUA Server Setup. Press the down cursor to highlight the second line and add both the port and the IP of the server. Keep hitting Enter to go through the menu and return to main screen.

desire to include the little-known push map, or to change the order in which maps are selected, mapcycle.txt is best left alone.

ALMOST THERE

The last step is to control how the server starts, and this is achieved by editing the HLDS shortcut on your desktop. Right-click on it and select Properties and click inside the Target field. Type a space, and enter the following information: - game tfc -port 27015 +maxplayers 10 +sv_maxrate 3000 +map casbah.

This tells HLDS to use the tfc modification, run the server from port 27015 with a maximum of 10 players and to start things off on the casbah map. The only thing that might not be immediately obvious is sv_maxrate. What this command does is limit the transfer rate to 3000bps for each client, thus allowing ten people to get a good game in

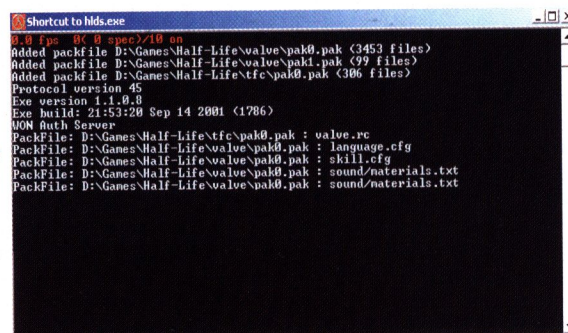


2fort upper respawn, the busiest doorway in TFC.

over an ADSL line. The default is 10,000, meaning only four players could join before you ran out of bandwidth.

Double-click the shortcut to start the server. One way the administrator is able to control the game is by typing commands directly into the HLDS console window. Useful ones include status to retrieve information on

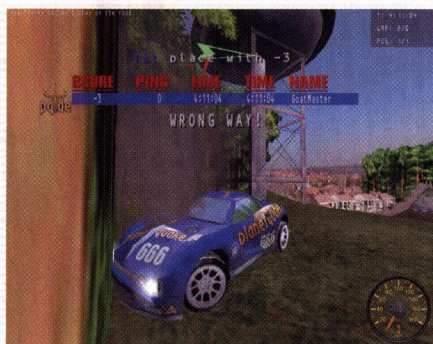
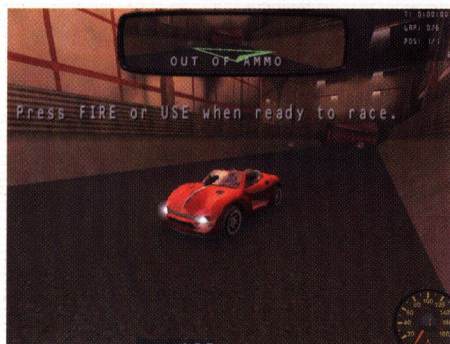
all connected clients, *changelevel <mapname>* to move the server on to a new map, *ban <userid> <minutes>* kick to remove someone from the server, and say <text> to announce something to all players. A complete listing of all server related commands can be found on the web at half-life.gamehelp.com/console/server.html.



The HLDS console screen.

THE MODSQUAD

Tony Lamb, the man we call Mr Mod opens the pearly gates of mod heaven



Quake III Rally skilfully mixes vehicles, racetracks and game types to please all.

QUAKE III RALLY

ON THE www.quakerally.com

SIZE 43.5Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of Quake III, patched to v1.31

FEW MODS make such radical changes to the parent game as does *Quake III Rally*, replacing human players with cars, gothic architecture with challenging racetracks, and the rampant bloodletting with boy-racer driving and spectacular crashes. This is also the ambition of the upcoming *Half-Life Rally* mod, but *QIII* is

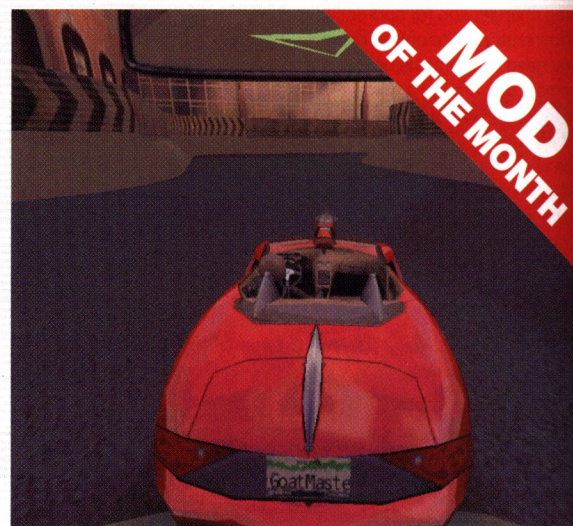
playable now – and online too – so has a major head start in the race for our affections. Boasting multiple gameplay modes including Deathmatch, Racing, Deathmatch, (regular) Racing and even Demolition Derby, *QIII* also has cool cars and vehicle customisation, suitably destructive weapons, neat maps and

simple controls. It's genuinely fun and really easy to get into. That's not to say it's perfect; the cars look as if they're stuck onto the racetrack rather than actually there, and engine sounds are non-existent (they're not ready yet so have been deliberately turned off – check out the website for how to turn them on if you're desperate), but future releases will address these issues and no doubt add more features to boot.

While *Quake III Rally* is never going to topple the likes of Colin McRae from the hard-drives of the real gravel-thrashing aficionados, it's a neat mod and makes a refreshing change too,

offering truly competitive gameplay and a need for real skill. It's not ultra-realistic – that isn't feasible, and the choice of cars from Minis to 1950s American muscle cars makes it obvious – but then *Quake III* was hardly designed with rally-driving mods in mind. *QIII* isn't a classic yet, but it could be if it continues to improve and blossom as it has done so far. There's a lot of attention to detail and it's tops for a LAN party if you fancy a change from the regular hack 'n' slash *Quake III* mods. Online is fun too, but server numbers are limited

and the mod is best served by the low-ping LAN environment, where the excitement can really blow a gasket.



Car models are wonderfully detailed.



PCZONE VERDICT **79**

Absorbing from bumper to bumper

AIRFIGHT UT v3.0

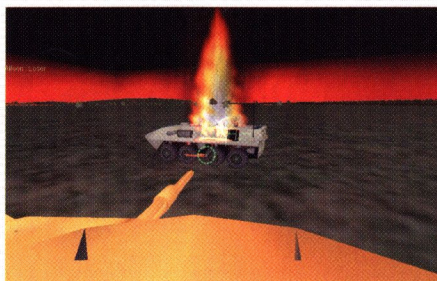
ON THE www.planetunreal.com/airfight

SIZE 25.3Mb **REQUIRES** Needs full version of Unreal Tournament

AIRFIGHT has always shown a lot of potential but it's only now with Beta 3.0 that much of what it promised has been truly realised. The first version was enjoyable, but the planes had the handling attributes of Airfix kits on sticks, with an awkward chase-cam camera angle and as much chance of crashing as actually getting some kills. The mod always looked good though, and dogfighting was fun, but it needed a lot of refinement. Release 2 was better, but now Beta 3 is getting serious,

adding ground vehicles, more planes, better maps, improved vehicle physics and many more subtle tweaks.

Of these improvements, the best is the inclusion of ground vehicles, and you can now take your pick from fast but lightly armed and armoured personnel carriers to medium tanks and 60 ton behemoths that lumber around, twatting anything that moves. Some annoying graphical glitches hinder enjoyment of the tanks, and range-finding is something of a black art, but it's



Airfight UT's new ground vehicles get stuck in.

a first outing for them after all. No such problems with the aircraft and helicopters though, which are now blessed with a proper informative HUD, better weapons and a vastly improved first-

person viewpoint. Unfortunately, the maps are still too small, and online support isn't as good as it should be (so battling over a LAN is best) but no matter how you play, it's still great fun.



Soviet MI24-Hind HUD and cockpit view.

PCZONE VERDICT **75**

Getting better all the time

QUAKE III FORTRESS V2



www.q3f.com

SIZE 143.5Mb REQUIRES Full version of Quake III, patched to v1.31

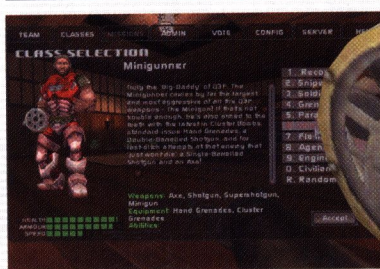
DESPITE THIS

mod's history with the original *Quake*, when Valve's *Half-Life* version of *Team Fortress* burst onto the scene a couple of years ago, its blend of action and strategy quickly gained huge popularity and left distraught *Quake III* fans sidelined with no funky version of their own. Eventually however, *Quake III Fortress* appeared and not only achieved a more aggressive style all of its own but also an equally enthusiastic (if smaller) following. This made up for the initially inferior looking maps and characters, kept the fans happy, and set the ball rolling for a series of ever more impressive upgrades. Since

Beta 1H back in issue 104, the *QIII* team have been very busy indeed, beaver away to improve almost every area of the mod, and their time has clearly been well spent with this latest incarnation boasting some of the best maps and skins of any mod around. The interface is equally user friendly and the whole experience is a joy, limited only by the number of online servers and the need for a top end machine to play the mod on in the first place. Top class.

**PCZONE
VERDICT 85**

A *Quake III* essential



Quake III Fortress might just have the tastiest sentry gun of any FPS.

THE WASTES V2



www.planethalflife.com/thewastes/

SIZE 45.3Mb REQUIRES Full version of Half-Life

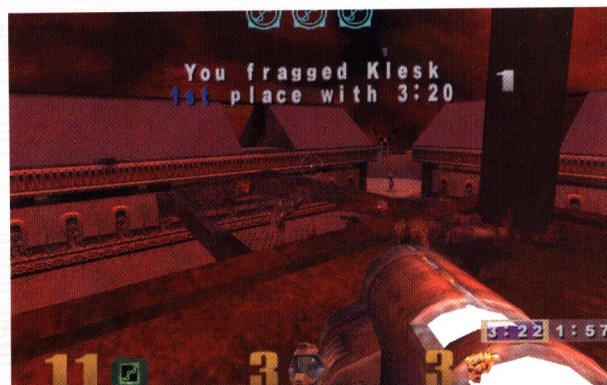
THE WASTES is basically the mod formerly known as *Wasteland Half-Life*, but re-hashed, updated and re-presented with new maps, characters and an all-new storyline. However, the basic premise remains the same. You find yourself in a post-apocalyptic world (that old chestnut) with five teams to choose from along with a wide selection of primary and melee weapons. These indeed are an unusual mix, with the more familiar Desert Eagle and MP5 joined by a bizarre selection of close-quarter skull-splitters including a nail-studded club and even a Japanese sword. Interestingly, many weapons have a novel secondary fire method – you can pistol whip an enemy or hit them with a rifle butt for example. Most maps have been carried over from *Wasteland HL*, but there are new ones too, and these along with the great weapons models, Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch and Object Capture modes, and many neat gameplay features make for an enjoyable *Half-Life* mod. The lack of online servers is the only real bugbear, and makes this a LAN game only so far. With more support online, this mod could do a whole lot better.

**PCZONE
VERDICT 69**

A worthwhile update



Wasteland maps promote close-quarter scrapping.



Railgun needs accuracy and sharp reflexes backing it up.

KING OF THE MOUNTAIN V1.3



www.king-of-the-mountain.com.de.vu/

SIZE 9Mb REQUIRES Full version of Quake III, patched to v1.3

KING OF THE Mountain is essentially the King Of The Hill game with a couple of added whistles and bells. It's a free-for-all deathmatch with the majority of weapons unavailable and sheer close-quarter skill the way to win. With only the railgun and shotgun to hand it's almost Instagib, but where that game type relies solely on fragging opponents to rack up the points, in *KOTM* you're also rewarded for the amount of time you spend in the scoring zone of each map. These, although basic and limited in number (seven), suit the gameplay well and keep the action focused on that all-

important scoring area. If you top the scoreboard you'll begin to glow green and every other player – be they bot or human – will make an extra special effort to kill you. Populate your game with bots and you'll wind up a greasy splat all too quickly. With standard character models and weapons, *King Of The Mountain* is a familiar gametype and doesn't add anything new, but if you want to be kept on your toes and test your skills then it's an enjoyable workout.

**PCZONE
VERDICT 65**

Action packed

DISC PAGES

DISCS James Winn, Mark Eveleigh and Luke Walker
WORDS Rhianna Pratchett and Matt Cheshire



HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline on 08701 711 482. The line is open weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Have a pen-and paper to hand, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

■ You need at least a P266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on the discs. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card.

■ Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D accelerator only.

DISCLAIMER

■ This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.

■ Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

DIVINE DIVINITY

CD2/DVD Pub: CDV

Better clear out your diary for the next few days as this exclusive demo for *Divine Divinity* is pretty damn meaty, with an estimated average of 10-15 hours of gameplay, and even more if you explore every area. After being ambushed by orcs and hit by a huge bolt of holy light you're feeling a bit rough. You find yourself waking up in the home of Joram, a healer from the town of Aleroth who found you unconscious in the woods. There are several quests to complete in the town itself as well as four levels below the town and a few areas outside.

Most of Aleroth's inhabitants will be friendly or neutral towards you at first, but your behaviour towards them can drastically change their attitude towards you. For example, if you help them in some way they

might give you a piece of information or lower the price of their goods. Conversely, if you mess with their stuff or attempt to nick things from under their



So strideth Sir Korda.

noses, they'll lock their doors or fire off a few spells at your fast retreating arse.

You'll also find that many things around the village can be picked up, opened or even used as weapons. A harmless-looking rake can turn into a deadly weapon and although you won't be able to make full use of them in this demo, various plants and herbs can be turned into potions. Even rotting food can be manufactured into poison for increasing the damage of your weapons. All this and more is in the full game, but until then let this demo be your guiding light.



Once you've won over the shopkeeper you can trade old junk for new.

WALKTHROUGH → WARNING: SPOILERS

GEORGE'S HERB QUEST



Find a way to unfreeze Lanilor.

1 In order to curry favour with George the shopkeeper you'll need to get him the herbs he wants from Lanilor's garden. Since Lanilor won't give them to George and simply taking things without asking won't make you any friends, you'll need to win Lanilor over. Wait until you see the cut-scene where Lanilor gets frozen by Mardaneous.



Take these herbs to George.

2 Once Lanilor is frozen, click on the well near Mardaneous' house to get transported to his cellar. Pick up the bottles lying around and go upstairs. Persuade Mardaneous to unfreeze Lanilor and when he does, ask Lanilor if you can take some herbs from his garden. Take them back to George who'll give you a reduced rate on his goods.

HEALING GEMS QUEST



Ask the healing shrine for the last gem.

1 Two of the healers in the village, Otho and Goemoe, both have sick soldiers they're looking after. Unfortunately the healing shrine in the village has been tainted. There's only one healing stone left, and neither of the healers wants to take the stone for their patient because it would condemn the other patient to death.



Now you have two!

2 Find the magic mirror in the house near Otho's place. If you move the crates, you'll also find a useful book on magic mirrors. Go to the healing shrine near Goemoe's locked house and get the gem. Place the mirror in the deep pool of water below Goemoe's shop. When you drop the gem in the water it duplicates itself. Go and give a gem to each of the soldiers to gain experience points.

DUNGEON SIEGE

CD1/DVD Pub: EA Reviewed: Issue 114 (89%)

The second of our exclusive RPG demos this month is *Dungeon Siege*, an epic hack 'n' slash through a beautifully rendered 3D world. The demo contains about ten per cent of the full game, which should keep you busy for a good few hours, especially if you try it on all three difficulty levels. It also contains multiplayer support.

You start the game as a farmer, your hoeing interrupted by the appearance of your friend Norick who has been fatally wounded during an uprising of the local orc-style krugs. His dying wish is for you to visit Gyorn in the town of Stonebridge and try and find out what's happening.

The first thing you need to do is forget that you're a farmer – don't bother picking up any of the farming tools you see lying around your fields. They take up a lot of space in your inventory and aren't as effective a weapon as the knife you're already holding. Work your way through

your farmlands, taking out the krugs along the way. Make sure you pick up the fireshot spell that's directly across the bridge from where you start, as this is your first combat magic spell and it makes for a good ranged attack. About 50 per cent of barrels and chests around the place contain gold, potions or other items, so basically bash everything that can be bashed.

From there on in it's basically a case of battling your way through the fields and woods. The footpath is obvious, but it's always worth deviating a little because you can often find hidden caves and more things to kill. You'll find that the easy route to Stonebridge has been blocked, and instead you'll have to take the scenic route through the local crypts to reach the village. The crypts contain not only lots of loot and some tough little baddies, but also the second member of your party, Ulora.



Look out for the spells which mean you can fight from a distance.



Fight on a healing shrine and you'll gain life as fast as you lose it.



Every now and then you'll come across a guy who thinks he's tough.

BATTLE TACTICS



Combat magic gives you some lethal range and mêlée attacks.

The *Dungeon Siege* combat system is both simple and unique, especially when compared to the complex fighting system of many RPGs. Every weapon you choose to fight with defines the way your character develops. For example, if you start by using mêlée weapons such as daggers or maces, you'll notice that your skill in that weapon goes up and your strength increases faster, allowing you to wear better armour and wield more effective weapons. Similarly if you use either combat or nature magic your intelligence will go up, as well as your skill in those particular areas, allowing you to use more powerful spells.



You can toggle the attack, movement and targeting sensitivity of each party member.

To create a good, all-round character try specialising in mêlée weapons. You should then have a secondary skill in a ranged area such as bows, or combat magic. Ulora starts with even skill points in all areas so she can be trained up in whichever discipline you choose. If you've chosen to specialise as a mêlée fighter, then as back-up, start training up Ulora as a ranged fighter. As your party starts to grow make sure you have each area covered. One of the best combinations is to have few fighters, backed up by a ranged fighter and a combat mage, plus a nature mage with a healing spell on the go.

SUDDEN STRIKE 2

CD1/DVD Pub: CDV

Once again Russian developer Fireglow and German publisher CDV have teamed up to bring WWII fans another slice of *Sudden Strike* action, this time in the imaginatively named *Sudden Strike II*. The original was a superb game, and with a few improvements, we're expecting big things from this when it's finally released.

This demo offers both single and multiplayer options. The single-player game sees you in command of a Japanese mission to rescue some captive pilots from the British, which is accomplished by completing four objectives. You must find the pilots and rescue them by conquering the village in

which they are being held captive. Once this is achieved, you move east to capture another village, and then south to take over an enemy airfield. The last stage has you boarding two Japanese planes and heading to a small island with an aircraft full of paratroopers. There you defeat the last of the British. For *Sudden Strike* veterans this should prove an easy task, but it will be fairly challenging for novices.

Multiplayer is also featured, giving you a different set of objectives and a spanking new challenge. At the time of going to print, multiplayer servers were very hard to find, but there should be some up by the time you read this.



It's the old parachuting-in-by-daylight trick.



Bombs away.

TEAM FACTOR

CD1/DVD Pub: Singularity Software



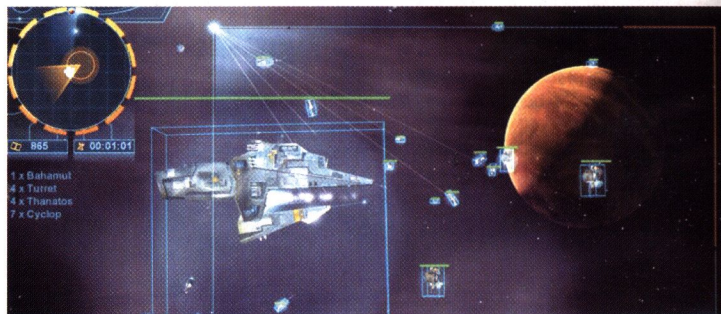
You're making this too easy for me.

At last year's ECTS, *Team Factor* caused quite a stir among the gaming masses. Czech developer 7FX (based in Prague just up the road from the team behind *Operation Flashpoint*) has spent two and a half years working on the game, and promise that it won't be just another first-person shooter. Offering military style co-op play, *Team Factor* is obviously seeking to take on the mighty *Counter-Strike*. Check out our exclusive, multiplayer-only demo of one of this year's potential hits, and make your own mind up.

The graphics certainly don't look bad, and the sounds are top-class, but it's only by playing through the demo level with a few other players that you'll be able to get a feel for this game. There's only one map available on the demo, but it's a good size and provides action by the bucketload. Single-player mode is also available on the menu, but it's not available until our second exclusive demo on next month's disc. Servers are a bit thin on the ground at the time of going to press, but then that's because we've got it first. Enjoy.

STARMAGEDDON: PROJECT EARTH

CD1/DVD Pub: Mindscape



Yes... yes... I think I can see my house from here.

Space-based RTS games aren't all that common, and decent ones even less so, but *Starmageddon: Project Earth* may be just the game to change all that. It may not make as big an impression as *Homeworld* but judging by this demo, it looks set to further the genre and make it more accessible to a variety of players. The interface and controls are a cinch to master, and the demo offers an extensive tutorial to get started, with tips on how to control your ships, execute actions and camera movements and build new ships and equipment.

The single-player game is a little bit trickier. Set around one time period, you can choose one of two factions to play as. On one side you have the Earth Forces, and on the other, the Daemons, an aggressive bunch hellbent on carnage and destruction. It's not an easy game to play if you're not used to this kind of thing, and it may seem quite slow to start with, but stick with it and we promise you will have a rewarding experience.



Moloch is powerful and deadly, truly one big mother of a ship!

MOD REVIEWS CD1

Quake III Fortress 2

King Of The Mountain

PATCHES CD1

Half-Life

Counter-Strike 1.4 (Mod) + Half-Life 1.1.0.9

PATCHES CD2

Anarchy Online v13.92 to v14

Anarchy Online v14 to v14.1

Might & Magic IX v1.2

Return To Castle Wolfenstein v1.31 Lite

Space Empires IV Gold v1.67

SuperPower v1.01b

The War Engine v1.02 to v1.03

Warlords Battlecry II v1.03

EXTENDED PLAY CD1

Stronghold v1.2

Ghost Recon: Desert Siege Multiplayer

Jedi Knight 2 - Carbon Freeze

Return To Castle Wolfenstein
Multiplayer Maps Part 1

EXTENDED PLAY CD2

Baldur's Gate II NPC - Kelsey

Baldur's Gate II: ToF NPC - Tashia

CheatStation

FoxBot v0.615

Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault Tools

DVD EXCLUSIVES

ALL THE CONTENT ON THIS PAGE IS ONLY AVAILABLE ON THE DVD EDITION OF PC ZONE. TO SUBSCRIBE AND GET A PACKED DVD EVERY MONTH, TURN TO PAGE 118



Damn no rope, load the large humorous banana skin.

SUPERTEST

We always like to feel the Force whenever possible, and this month we grab hold of it with both hands in our *Star Wars* Supertest. We shut Keith, Steve, Anthony, Mark and Richie in a room and got them to reveal all – five men whose teenage years were spent dreaming of Princess Leia in the gold bikini (and probably a great deal of their adult years as well). Find out if they actually do know one end of a lightsaber from the other, then check out the three *Star Wars* demos we've laid on for you, as well as the movie for *Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast*.

THE CONTENDERS

Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds
Star Wars: Force Commander
Star Wars: Star Fighter
Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast (movie)

EXTENDED PLAY

Baldur's Gate II
Epic Endeavours for Baldur's Gate II
Medal Of Honor
Medal Of Honor: James Bondage's Allied Cammo
Medal Of Honor Skin: Koenig
Medal Of Honor Skin: Rommel
Quake III
Quake III – Quick Death v1.1
Return To Castle Wolfenstein
Allied Cammo Skin 1
Allies Skin Royal Marines Commando
Allies Skin – Trench 2
MP Poison Allies Skin Pack



This month's *Shogun* goodies include historical battles and map packs.

MP Poison Axis Skin Pack
Return To Castle Wolfenstein Maps Part 2
Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast
Jedi Knight II: The Ladder SP Map
Shogun: Total War
STW Anegawa Historical Battle



One too many mushrooms and it's pink turtles all the way. Check out the movie for Korean MMORPG *Shining Lore* on this month's DVD.



The new *Warrior Kings* v1.2 demo has a tutorial and single-player level with all the bug fixes and other improvements of the patched retail version.

STW Campaigns 156B
STW Gempei War Campaign
STW Ishibashiyama Historical Battle
STW Map Pack 1.16
STW Map Pack 3.03
STW Mongol invasion Historical Campaign
STW Nobunaga's Dilemma Campaign
STW Sekigahara Historical Battle
STW Shizugatake Historical Battle
STW Shogun Warlord Campaign
STW Tiles Game

PLAYABLE DEMOS

Warrior Kings v1.2
Atrox
Final Duel 2: Death Match Arena
Cultures 2: The Gates of Asgard
Gorasul: The Legacy of the Dragon
The Secret of the Nautilus
Gems 3D v2.6

THE MODSQUAD

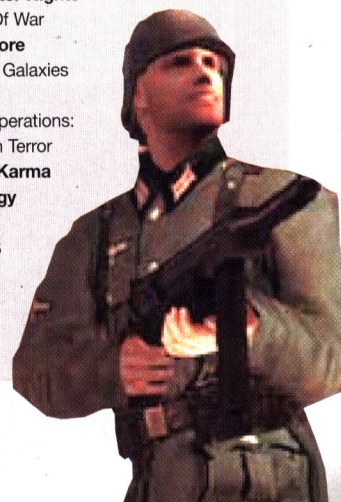
The best new releases every month. See page 122 for full reviews.
Airfight UT 3.0
Quake III Rally
The Wastes

PATCHES

Anarchy Online v11 to v14
Blood Omen 2 v1.01
Counter-Strike Retail Patch
Ghost Recon: Desert Siege Multiplayer
Gorasul 1.06
IL-2 Sturmovik 1.0.4 (combined)

MOVIES

Blitzkrieg
Duke Nukem Manhattan project
FIA GT
Gore
Iron Storm
Karma: Immortality
Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter
Master Rallye: G-Force 4 video
Neverwinter Nights
Prisoner Of War
Shining Lore
Star Wars Galaxies
Strident
Tactical Operations:
Assault on Terror
Unreal II Karma
Technology demo
WWII RTS



IT'S A DEAL



You've been betrayed and left for dead. Now you're taking revenge, unless the city gets you first. Mob bosses need a favour, crooked cops need help and street gangs want you dead. You'll have to rob, steal and kill just to stay out of serious trouble. Anything can happen out there.

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

Virgin

megastores

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FIGHT CLUB

Membership is limited to those who love to take their aggression out on others: on PC ZONE's servers, the Free-For-All or at LAN parties. **Martin Korda** has the details



Counter-Strike returns to the PC ZONE Readers' Free-For-All with a bang.

AFTER SEVERAL months of highly successful *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* Free-For-Alls (apart from the one we had to cancel due to technical difficulties – apologies if you tried connecting to that one), we've decided

to go back to that old favourite *Counter-Strike*. With our brand spanking new host servers, we're hoping you'll get a better Ping than ever before. Not that it'll make much difference, as we're still going to whip the lot of you. At least

that's the plan, anyway. Check out the connection details opposite, cut off the top part of your skull and brand Thursday 20 June onto your brain. We'll see you online.



PC ZONE GAME SERVERS IN ASSOCIATION WITH JOLT

NEW FAST SERVERS... WHY YES, HOW DID YOU KNOW?

We've switched our game servers across to the ultra-fast Jolt service, which means that lag should now be a thing of the past. We've also changed the way you find them, and from this point on we'll refer to them by their name rather than by their address. You can use names in place of IP addresses

whenever you want to connect, either from within the game or from a server browser such as The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy, but remember to use the updated password printed below each and every month. If you want to find out more about Jolt and its fantastic range of services log on to www.jolt.co.uk.

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 – tfc1.zonegames.co.uk
Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 – tfc2.zonegames.co.uk

Quake III: Arena Public Server – q3.zonegames.co.uk

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 – cs1.zonegames.co.uk
Counter-Strike Public Server #2 – cs2.zonegames.co.uk
Counter-Strike Public Server #3 – cs3.zonegames.co.uk

Counter-Strike Public Server #4 – cs4.zonegames.co.uk

Unreal Tournament Public Server – ut.zonegames.co.uk

Return To Castle Wolfenstein Public Server – rtcw.zonegames.co.uk

PASSWORD: **settle**

LAN ROVER

STEVE 'SCALPER' RANDALL ON ALL TOMORROW'S LAN PARTIES...

Feeling tired of playing against faceless gamers online? Then get your arse to one of these...

■ On July 19-21 at Royal Air Force Lyneham, British servicemen past and present will hold their tri-monthly LAN event. To sponsor them write to giborama@beer.com and to book a place try www27.brinkster.com/dickie1969/db/index.asp

■ July 5-7 for www.lanse.co.uk. Usual stuff in High Wycombe.
■ July 14 @ www.flintfrag.co.uk for the regular one-day event in the Holiday Inn in North Wales.
■ June 1-3 sees Paddyboy doing the first HGLAN that I'm not going to be attending – not that I'm into the Royals, but because my wife won't let me out! For details, visit www.hglan.co.uk

■ My latest concept in LAN parties is not to set a date or game. Instead, visit the website, choose the game you'd like to play (or add it) and once I have 8-16 names down I'll mail you all with a date. Have your say on www.GGLAN.co.uk.

If you want me to mention your LAN party, give me two months notice and send me some beer and bribes at stevie@arsenalfc.net.

FREE-FOR-ALL

THURSDAY 20 JUNE

6.30pm – 9.00pm

Counter-Strike server

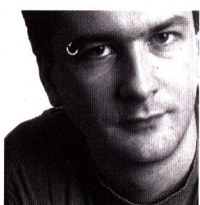
KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Dave Woods	Kid Unknown
Richie Shoemaker	Zapatero
Martin Korda	Nameless One
Anthony Holden	Shokupan
Mark Hill	Leatherface
Paul Presley	I R Baboon
Matthew Cheshire	Burnside
Phil Clark	Shit Kicker
Danny King-Smith	Ronin
Colin Mackleworth	M.A.C.H.I.N.E.

FREE-FOR-ALL CONNECTION DETAILS

Connecting to our Free-For-All Server is easy. To make things easier still, we've given the server a permanent home. To hook up from within the game, open the *Half-Life* console and type the password, which is *pczone*. Press enter, and after this type *connect ffa.zonegames.co.uk* and then press enter again.

You'll be taken right there. You can also add the server to popular game browsers like The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy 3D by entering *ffa.zonegames.co.uk* where you would normally provide an IP address. If you experience any problems connecting on the night then check our forum at www.pczone.co.uk, and find out if there are any last-minute changes or updates. Maps will cycle every 15-20 minutes, and in order to get as many of you a game as possible we may have to rotate players.



MAILBOX

Everybody needs a good rant every now and again, and we're here to listen...

■ HOLDING COURT Dave Woods



MULTIPLAYER MADNESS?

Would it be rude to say that I think *PC ZONE* is getting a bit obsessed with multiplayer? It seems that whenever a game comes along without a multiplayer option it is deemed unworthy, or lacking, even if – bizarrely – it was blatantly designed and intended to be a single-player experience. Despite this, it seems you're all too happy to accept

yet another MMORPG without even suggesting that it could also provide an exhilarating single-player experience.

So I come to your comment about the removal of multiplayer in *Unreal 2*. Was I the only person who actually felt relieved by this? It makes sense because, hopefully, it'll mean we get a far superior single-player experience

with dedicated multiplayer catered for in *Unreal Tournament 2003*. I don't think it improves a game to tack a cheap

multiplayer option on, and you need look no further than the *Deus Ex* multiplayer patch for proof.

Mike

No multiplayer in *Unreal 2*, but don't cry about it, turn to page 62 instead.

As far as first-person shooters go, multiplayer is an integral part of the package. In the old days *Unreal Episode 2* and *Unreal Tournament 2003* would have been two parts of the same game – now you have to pay twice for the different components. Of course if they're both twice as good as their forerunners then we'll be happy.

ODE TO A GAMES MAGAZINE

There is now a gaming mag called *PC ZONE*. With tips for your games and new skills you can hone. You can get help from



Find out what the developers really think of their games in our regular Games That Changed The World feature.

If you order online you will get money off, And you might get a prize for your e-mails, *cough*.

Alistair Clarke

same people will be saying, 'Oh we should've put a multiplayer option in.' It makes you think.

Paul Nash

Then again.

PAST FORWARD

I read with great interest what you had to say on the opening page of the magazine last issue; basically that to understand the future of games you must first understand the past. I've never considered myself a retro gamer (since I've only really been playing games for about seven years), but we forget sometimes how important some of the old games were in shaping the games we play today.

What made it hit home for me was reading your article on the making of *Command & Conquer*. There was stuff in there that the developers would never have

That is one of the main reasons we kicked it off as a regular. It's fascinating to go back and get the real story from those in the know... Speaking of which, *Doom* goes under the microscope this month – check out page 142 for details.

NONLINE SECTION

After a few months of fence-sitting I've finally decided that I like the new-look *PC ZONE*, but I've got one question. Why did you do away with the Online section? That used to be one of my favourite bits of the mag and now it's not there any more. What's with that?

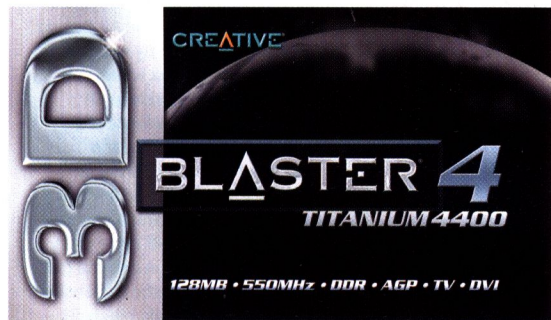
Lawrence Thorpe

We decided that online gaming is so important it shouldn't be isolated. Almost every game ships with online and multiplayer components and as part of mainstream gaming it deserves to sit with the rest of the magazine where we can give it more attention. We still do dedicated online reviews, mod reviews and round up the best add-ons you can find, and online games are covered in the Bulletin, Previews and Reviews sections.

GOT SOMETHING TO GET OFF YOUR CHEST? WRITE TO...

MAILBOX, PC ZONE, 30 CLEVELAND ST, LONDON W1T 4JD, OR E-MAIL: LETTERS@PCZONE.CO.UK

■ The Letter Of The Month wins a spanking new graphics card courtesy of the lovely people at Creative Labs. The *Blaster 4 Titanium 4400* is as good as the name suggests, and sporting the new GeForce 4 chipset, it gives you more bang than a rabbit stuffed with semtex.



"We forget sometimes how important some of the old games were in shaping the games we play today"

PAUL NASH

Watchdog, ask Wandy for tips, And give 'em a laugh with your funniest quips. It has hardware reviews and new things you should buy, So come along fellows and give it a try.

said if the game was just about to be released. Compare it with the *Grand Theft Auto III* preview, where the developers have to 'big up' the game, then think ahead to the retro feature in a few years time where I bet the

EX-BOX

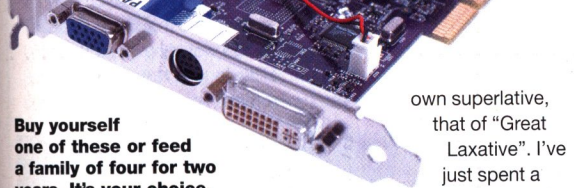
Just seen that the Xbox has dropped in price by £100 about a month after it went on sale. Now I was tempted to buy one for a second but then suddenly thought, what if we carry on like we are at the moment, ie not buying it. It'll come down in price again, and then it'll disappear from the shelves like the Dreamcast and then Microsoft will have to release *Halo* on the PC and we can all rejoice and stop sending hate mail to Bill Gates.

Bill_R

It's a long shot, but you never know...

HARD TIMES

The reason I'm writing is to ask why PC owners are so obsessed with upgrading their machines when obsolescence is so rife? A year ago I paid a man to upgrade my PC from a 766Mhz to a 1.4Ghz, add faster memory and a few other widgets and it cost me



Buy yourself one of these or feed a family of four for two years. It's your choice.

about £600. It would have cost about £400 for the parts alone, but my point is that within six weeks, I could've got the lot for about £200. And get this, you can buy an old 486 PC for less than the second-hand cost of a ZX Spectrum. It's madness I tell you. Why do we bother?

Because we can I suppose. It's a self-perpetuating cycle: The faster technology advances, the quicker current hardware dates and to make money the hardware companies have to charge high prices before their kit ends up in the bargain bin. Those that buy first pay most,

but do they get what they pay for? Maybe for a couple of weeks, but as soon as prices drop you just feel cheated. I'm sure this is one of the major factors keeping the PC back as a mass-market games machine.

Chris Brians

You'd have to be a very rich man to keep your PC at the cutting edge. The best thing you can do is keep a check on our hardware pages, especially the processor and motherboard PriceWatch chart. We'll let you know when prices are sensible enough to warrant sticking your hands in your pockets.

NEED TO KNOW?

I note that most letters to you start with something like "Great Mag". I'd like to add my very

own superlative, that of "Great Laxative". I've just spent a week in hospital undergoing hip-

replacement surgery and as a result of this I had to be escorted to the toilet by a nurse. Because I didn't want to look weird I didn't take my ZONE into the toilet with me. After numerous attempts and seven days I still hadn't produced anything, but within an hour of returning home I took PC ZONE with me and within minutes I'd passed two bowling ball type depth charges. I'd like to thank all the ZONE staff for producing something that chemicals and fibre couldn't.

Mike Agar

Our pleasure.

READER REVIEWS

▲ FANCY A CAREER WRITING FOR A GAMES MAG? WELL PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT...

We want reviews of the games you love or the ones you hate. Each one should be between 50 and 350 words and come with a score out of 100. The best one wins a game from the current charts. Send your review to the standard mailbox address (see boxout) and remember to include your name, address and telephone number.

DUNGEON SIEGE

PC ZONE ISSUE 114 - 89%



We said... "Dungeon Siege is a technological triumph and one of the most enjoyable games we have played in a long time. If you like your RPGs to place more emphasis on action and combat than stats, there is currently no better choice on the market."

Dungeon Siege starts as a simplified solo RPG in the hit/run/collect mode of *Diablo*. You start with nothing but a rusty dagger but soon stumble upon a couple of basic spells and a peasant's bow (with infinite arrows), and have to make a decision. Is your main character (who you can name, garb and train as you see fit) going to be magical, violent or a bit of a cross-classer?

After much wandering through the lush, zoom-and-rotate 3D world, your inventory cluttered with many cool implements of death and destruction, you meet the first of your potential companions. Some are not too choosy and will join your group of psychotic killers just for a laugh, while others want money for their services. And, repeat to fade.

That's more or less it as far as complexity goes. You wander the gorgeous, if linear, path. You fight, you kill, you level up your various characters, depending on what you choose for them to do. Sword wielders become melee experts, spell casters develop great mage powers. And so on.

Towards the latter part of the game, you find your own role changing to that of player-manager, choosing the right weapons and spells for everyone, setting a formation and then letting them wade into the ensuing carnage while you sit poised over the Health

and Mana hot-keys to keep everyone alive as they beat seven shades out of the increasingly ferocious opposition.

In foregoing complexity and concentrating on a load-free world of endless scrapping, Gas Powered Games have missed an opportunity, but *DS* is still involving, keeping you hooked right through to the end.

John Tapper

VERDICT: 80%

You didn't think the game was worthy of a Classic rating but from the moment I entered the beautiful world of *Dungeon Siege* I was hooked. I've been looking for a game that shows off my dated graphics card for ages and this is it. Graphics aren't everything but for total immersion you need brilliant visuals and *Dungeon Siege* is probably the best looking game I've seen.

As far as gameplay goes, constant fighting and healing might not be to everyone's taste but I love what I call light RPGs like this. For a few hours every day I can keep progressing, keep enhancing my party and getting drawn into the admittedly shallow story. In my opinion, *DS* is the new benchmark RPG.

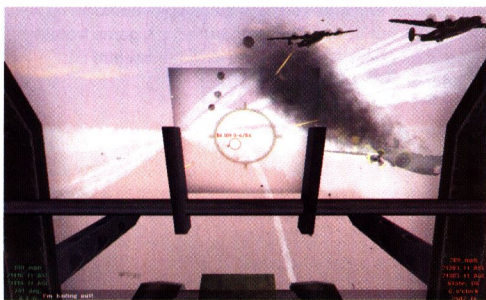
Paul Bartlett

VERDICT: 92%

READER REVIEWS

▲ JANE'S ATTACK SQUADRON

PC ZONE ISSUE 116 – 65%



We said... "It's a shame but JAS seems like something of a missed opportunity. There's enough potential to produce a very decent game, but the lack of missions and poor plane models smack of a title that's not complete."

Here we have another example of a game that's pushed out early and is full of bugs. The photos in the ad look marvellous and the 'blurb' whets your appetite, but the reality is different. Graphics are rough, similar to *Fighter Squadron*, which is years out of date. When you look at what was achieved in *IL2* this makes you want to weep.

Flight/damage models are a mixed bag and landing is a joke. I landed a plane, stopped the engine, then raised the undercarriage expecting lots of crunching noises. Nothing happened so I restarted and took off with no wheels.

This is not a serious flight sim, it's an arcade sim. There is no career structure, no planning or planning map, not even an in-flight map so the "million square miles of satellite accurate mapped terrain" are wasted. The so-called Campaigns are a laugh, eight or so non-related missions stuck together using different aircraft.

I have other pros and cons, but I'll finish by saying that this had the potential to be the WWII flight simmers' dream but it doesn't even get half-way. I don't understand why developers don't read the bulletin boards to see what the community wants.

N Pettigrew

VERDICT: 65%

JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

PC ZONE ISSUE 115 – 91%

Forget *Medal Of Honor*, forget *AvP2*, long live Kyle Katarn... *Jedi Outcast* has everything. You start with a blaster, some taxing puzzles and a darn fine FPS. Just when you think you've seen it all, you're introduced to your weapon of choice and ever increasing force powers.

Suddenly the game shifts up two gears, and you're plunged into new heights of taxing hack 'n' slash action. Add the authentic sound, bland but stunning visuals and great animation, and it all blends together very nicely.

OK, so from a purist standpoint it's not flawless: the in game cut-scenes are below par, early AI relies on numbers rather than menace and the game suffers from a lack of 'spine-chilling moments'. Multiplayer is also quite weak, but overall this is one of the finest examples of the genre.

Waine

VERDICT: 95%

TEST DRIVE

After reading a letter sent in by Tim Lambert in the May issue, it got me thinking. Loads of games are good but could be loads better if they weren't rushed or a few simple problems were ironed out. Now I'm not overly knowledgeable about the games industry but why don't developers send early versions to mags like yourself for your expert opinion? Surely

your 'life' and could even result in your death. You would of course hold these people morally responsible for their actions would you not? I know this is a facile argument but that does not mean it is without merit. As computer technology and programming become more and more adept at creating 'virtual beings' should we not consider our moral obligations to our 'virtual progeny'? If we

connection between enjoying herself and sitting down in front of a screen that's not showing *Coronation Street* or *EastEnders*, although we did play a point-and-click adventure through once that she seemed to get into. (Having said that, it was early days in our relationship and I think she was just trying to impress me.)

The other week I got my old Dreamcast out and convinced her we should play *Soul Calibur*. Then she went on and beat me twice in a row. On the third game she asked me what key she had to press to move left! I couldn't believe it. Looking over she was just stabbing at buttons randomly. And that is proof that PCs are better.

Dan Colebridge

"Why do some companies announce games so early and yet others leave it until the last minute?"

BARRY WHITE

if you're going to invest millions of pounds then you want to know that people actually like it.

Tom Fletcher

don't then the well-worn sci-fi plot about machines rebelling against their human masters may well come true. Just a thought...

Ben Calder

Rhianna's secret is out.

PREMATURE

I have a question for you: Why do some companies announce games so early and yet others leave it until the last minute? Look at *Duke Nukem Forever*, a game that's been in development longer than I've been alive. Others just seem to arrive out of nowhere, like *GTA III* on the PC. I know it wasn't exactly a secret but you previewed it last issue for the first time and I've been told it's going on sale on May 24. I would have thought *GTA III*'s release would have strung out a little longer. Not that I'm complaining, although it might

All companies employ beta testers to ensure that their games are released without any bugs – some are better than others, and some are given more time and support from their employers. We'd be brilliant obviously, although occasionally developers do take note of remarks we make at early screenings and previews.

SIM ABUSE

I think you were a trifle unfair on Alex Carson when he suggested that AI could have feelings that we're responsible for causing them pain. Believe it or not this is a topic for serious philosophical discussion – for some good examples on whether a computer can be truly conscious see *The Mind's I*, from Dennet and Hofstadter.

Consider the fact that you could in fact, as you read this, be part of an exceptionally elaborate computer game (think *The Sims* taken to a much higher level). You aren't aware of this and have no way to prove this fact either way (in fact you're programmed so as to be unable to discover it). The players of this game take actions, which affect

You mean that when we walled our Sim up in a room and watched him soil himself until he lost his mind and died in his own mess... Actually it could be time to play the game again.

GIRL GAMERZ

I've got a point to make on the debate between consoles and PCs and which is better. My girlfriend's not into games at all. She just can't seem to make the

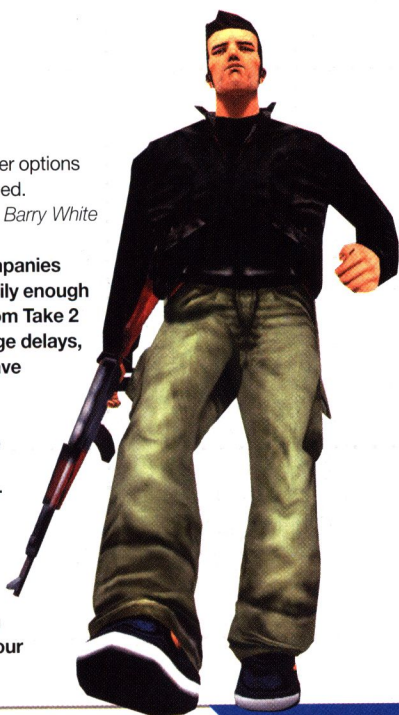


Stop the Sims abuse – Sims have feelings, too.

have meant multiplayer options would have been added.

Barry White

It's just the way companies work, although funnily enough both of these are from Take 2 Interactive. With huge delays, like the ones that have beset Mr Nukem I imagine more and more publishers are going to keep their masterpieces under wraps until they're confident of a release date. No-one likes a no-show. One question for you: that's not your real name is it? **W**



word here.

You're in valley.
look stream

You are in a valley in the forest beside a stream tumbling along a rocky bed.

At your feet all the water of the stream splashes into a 2-inch slit in the rock. Downstream the streambed is bare rock.

You are in a 20-foot depression floored with bare dirt. Set into the dirt is a strong steel grate mounted in concrete. A dry streambed leads into the depression.

The grate is locked.

Now in theory you'd expect your cutting-edge PC to be able to handle this, but that ain't necessarily so.

OLD TIMER

I recently bought a PlayStation 2 and loved the fact that I could play all my old PSOne games on it. That got me thinking about some of my old PC games. Theoretically the modern PC that sits on your desk at work (or on top of the ironing board at home) should be able to run every piece of software ever written for it, from 1981's *Microsoft Adventure*, to *Microsoft Flight Sim 2002*. Underneath the beige box, the PC's innards have remained largely unaltered and with 21 years of gaming heritage behind it, you would have thought backward compatibility would be one of the few remaining cornerstones that have kept the PC sailing smoothly atop the tumultuous ever-changing tide of consoles that ripple beneath.

Well that may have been so once upon a time, but no longer. I tried to get some of my old classic DOS games working recently and had about as much success as I did when I put my *Metal Gear Solid 2* disc inside my PC. You may be asking the question why would you be wanting to play all those old games anyway, but I've got hundreds (well a few) games that I'd love to play again, but I reckon that unless I rip out my Pentium 4 and replace it with a small clump of wire wool I'm buggered.

Tom Duncans

Hold fire. We're going to teach you how to get all your old DOS games working in the near future.

HOT TOPIC

IN ISSUE 116 WE CHARTED THE HISTORY OF ONLINE GAMING FROM ITS HUMBLE ROOTS IN 1969 TO THE PRESENT DAY WHERE PEOPLE EITHER CHEAT AT COUNTER-STRIKE OR SIT IN GLORIFIED CHATROOMS AND USE AN AVATAR THAT'S THREE TIMES AS UGLY AS THEY ARE IN REAL LIFE. WHERE DID IT ALL GO WRONG AND WHAT BE AN IDEAL ALTERNATIVE?

WHAT WE SAID...

"Things will get better, but for the next few years we'll have to endure the legacy of games based on flawed designs that are perceived as being successful because they make a ton of money. We've come a long way in 30 years and yet, in many ways, very little has changed. For sure, with 100 million gamers expected online by 2005, the future will be busier than ever and just as bright as the past. But don't expect it to be cheap..."

WHAT YOU SAID...

How about this then? A real-life city that is modelled down to the polygon, a full simulation of the real one. Two or more gangs (like the mafia) play each other for total domination of the city. You have to acquire muscle, or assassins who are other players.

Ugeine

My idea has always been a full night/day city where you play either law enforcement officers (SWAT, Police, etc), or criminals (terrorists, robbers etc) and you're free to do what you want. If you're the good guys you get points for stopping the bad guys (upholding law etc) and you score points for robberies, etc, if you're a criminal.

Benjstevo

Reading some of the posts above made me think of *The Sims* online, but with a more 'real-life' feel to it. I know people say they don't like *The Sims*, but from what I have read in this Hot Topic so far, it does seem to be what most people want.

Original_aceman

My game takes place in a city, somewhere like Northampton, a bit like that game *Republic*. Each gang is like a clan, and each recruit (mob boss, assassin, muscle) is a player who can level himself up RPG-style. There are a number of gangs warring over total control of the city, and to get control you have to grab and hold territories. When you hold these, you can control some/all of the industries shops. You have total domination when you take over the town hall and become mayor. If you hold this position for four weeks then you have won the game.

Ugeine

COME AND 'AVE A GO

Every month, there will be a new Hot Topic on the PC ZONE Website. Check out www.pczone.co.uk, join in the arguments, entertain us or say something intelligent and get yourself in the magazine. The best contribution gets a game from the current top ten.

All your suggestions look pretty unoriginal to me at first glance. Anyone ever see an old film called *The Warriors*? About street gangs? Well how about if a big online world was made, in the form of a deserted city, where street gangs ruled. New players would join the game and start alone with very little equipment, their first goal being joining up with a gang. Pretty rough outline, but I think it reflects one of the first ideas on this thread about going through real life doing what you liked...

Spearchew

I don't know about anyone else, but the reason I go online is to get away from the hassles of the real world. After reading some of your views on the 'Ultimate' online game the general consensus appears to be the opposite.

I'm not a fan of walking around talking to people because I've been doing that for most of my life. Why would I want to talk to my boss in my free time when I can shoot him in the head in *Medal Of Honor*?

Goose 64

What is a game? A game is a specified type of activity seen as competitive that is governed by rules... so being able to do anything and everything is not a game. My idea of online gaming heaven would be an online beat 'em up with up to 32 players kicking the hell out of each other. It would play like *Tekken* mixed with deathmatch.

Hard-Wired

How about an adventure game where the objective is to find the people who make *The Sims* then making them f***** well stop?

Slackdog

If I was going to ask for anything in the online gaming world, I'd ask for a friendlier atmosphere. How often do you see people saying, "thanks for a nice game everyone, hopefully see you all tomorrow", or, "hey! Thanks PC ZONE server people I enjoyed myself tonight and it didn't cost me a penny."

LoonyUK



THE PCZONE A-LIST

◀ SHOOTERS ▶

MEDAL OF HONOR



It may have taken years but finally there's a shooter worthy of topping *Half-Life*. Brilliant level design, surprisingly good AI, an unparalleled sense of atmosphere and intensity, not to mention beautifully scripted scenes. It's also the first game that Richie has finished three times in as many months, and the first FPS Rhianna has finished in her life, which gives you some indication of the game's worth.

PUB EA DEV 2015

PCZ ISSUE 112



HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent Opposing Force add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Vivendi DEV Valve Software

PCZ ISSUE 71



ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

If we rated games on atmosphere and tension *AvP2* would've been the highest-scoring game ever. The multiplayer game and 3D engine brought the score down, but for scares nothing can touch this three-way fragfest.

PUB Vivendi DEV Monolith

PCZ ISSUE 110



MAX PAYNE

It's not big and it's not clever, but for style and content *Max Payne* receives top marks. The character animations and soon-to-be-copied-by-everyone Bullet Time mode are the real stars, it's just a shame it only lasts a few hours.

PUB Take 2 DEV Remedy

PCZ ISSUE 107



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

A mixed bag. Visually it might be at the top of the pile, but the single-player game has been completely eclipsed by *Medal Of Honor*. Forget that and head for the multiplayer action instead, where the game comes into its own.

PUB Activision DEV Gray Matter/Nerve

PCZ ISSUE 112



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Unreal Tournament's multiplayer mode is more than a match for *Quake III*, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. Single-player mode is a tad short, but it's still more of a challenge than most.

PUB Infogrames DEV Epic/Digital Extremes

PCZ ISSUE 81



QUAKE III ARENA

Still going strong with a constant stream of mods and add-ons, *Quake III* is probably the best game for pure deathmatch multiplayer, but in terms of numbers it's trounced online by *Half-Life* and *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Activision DEV id

PCZ ISSUE 87



JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

The first *Star Wars* game to be awarded a *PC ZONE* Classic award since the original *Jedi Knight* back in 1997. This is more than just a simple FPS, it's frustrating, rewarding and extremely good fun. A new hope has come.

PUB Activision DEV Raven

PCZ ISSUE 115



CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

This atmospheric shooter is one of the most unsettling we've seen and the superb graphics and sound will have you jumping like a little girl. A game that pushes the boundaries of narrative gameplay.

PUB EA DEV EALA

PCZ ISSUE 101



TRIBES 2

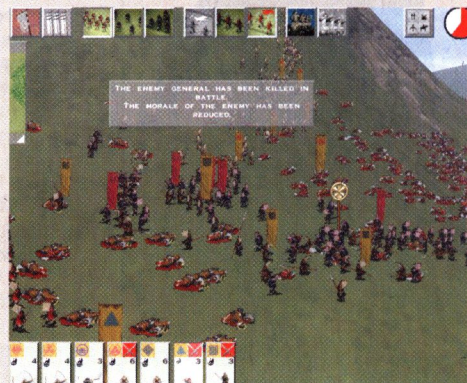
If you're after quality co-operative action in expansive outdoor environments with superb visuals and smooth play, there's no better place to go than online with *Tribes 2*. If you're not much of a team player then steer clear.

PUB Vivendi DEV Dynamix

PCZ ISSUE 103

◀ STRATEGY ▶

SHOGUN: WARLORDS



Take command of enormous armies, engage in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate generals and conquer your way through feudal Japan. This edition further improves the game's capable 3D engine, gives you greater customisation over your units and also lets you play as the Mongols. Copious in-game options never get in the way of the instant playability. *Shogun* will blow you away.

PUB EA DEV Creative Assembly

PCZ ISSUE 89



WARRIOR KINGS

A visually stunning and hugely ambitious RTS that melds the strategic diversity of *Battle Realms* with the huge 3D rolling landscapes of *Shogun*. With a compelling story to boot, no strategy fan should be without a copy.

PUB Microids DEV Black Cactus

PCZ ISSUE 114



COMMANDOS 2

There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive, preposterously detailed follow-up even more.

PUB Eidos DEV Pyro Studio

PCZ ISSUE 108



COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement, a 3D landscape with real physics modelling and great graphics and sound make it truly absorbing. An essential purchase.

PUB CDV DEV GSC Gameworld

PCZ ISSUE 101



Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-yr-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into.

PUB EON DEV Bitmap Brothers

PCZ ISSUE 101



ETHERLORDS

This unexpected gem might just be good enough to convert those who immediately associate 'turn-based' with the word 'geek'. The visuals and sound are stunning, the tactical variety truly staggering – fantastic stuff.

PUB JoWood DEV Nival Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 112



BATTLE REALMS

Emerging from the quagmire of all too similar RTS games this is a genuinely ground-breaking strategy game. It does have its flaws which include a tedious plot, but the great use of sound, visuals and gameplay shine through.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Liquid Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 111



AGE OF EMPIRES II: GOLD EDITION

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *Age of Empires II* the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. A great RTS.

PUB Microsoft DEV Ensemble Studios

PCZ ISSUE 84



SUDDEN STRIKE

Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling strategy title. Its large-scale battles, huge selection of units and superb interface make it a must for RTS fans.

PUB CDV DEV Fireglow

PCZ ISSUE 96



SHATTERED GALAXY

This hugely involving online game combines a monthly *EverQuest*-style subscription-based role-playing experience with massive *Total Annihilation*-influenced combat. Only available from the States, but well worth the price.

PUB www.sgalaxy.com DEV Nexon

PCZ ISSUE 108

Welcome to the all-new **PC ZONE A-List**, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers. Get in.

◀ ROLE-PLAYING GAMES ▶

DEUS EX



Warren Spector is one of the true visionaries of the computer game medium, and this is his opus. Combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming. The fascinating sci-fi plot and amazing attention to detail, combined with unparalleled player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is a landmark in gaming.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 93



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG.

PUB Interplay **DEV** Black Isle Studio
PCZ ISSUE 87



DUNGEON SIEGE

Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic because of the shortcomings in the narrative.

PUB Microsoft **DEV** Gas Powered Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.

PUB EA **DEV** Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 80



DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

With some of the best graphics seen in an MMORPG, *Dark Age Of Camelot* creates an atmospheric, engaging and open-ended world. The scale of battles alone should ensure it remains above *EverQuest* for a good few months.

PUB Koch Media **DEV** Mythic Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 112



BALDUR'S GATE II

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. An essential for anyone interested in PC role-playing.

PUB Interplay **DEV** Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 96



THRONE OF DARKNESS

An enjoyable party-based strategic hack 'n' slash from the developers of *Diablo* sees you take command of seven samurai as they fight their way through feudal Japan. Not for everyone, granted, but worth a look.

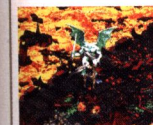
PUB Vivendi **DEV** Click Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 96



FREEDOM FORCE

Control your own group of superheroes in this immersive and fully destructible comic book world. It may not be the most sophisticated and beasty of RPGs, but *Freedom Force* is unadulterated bubble-gum fun at its best.

PUB EA **DEV** Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



DIABLO II

The sequel to the definitive hack 'n' slash took all the qualities of the original into a massive world of beautifully simplistic yet compelling gameplay. With a huge online community and an excellent expansion, *DII* is as addictive as ever.

PUB VU Games **DEV** Blizzard
PCZ ISSUE 84



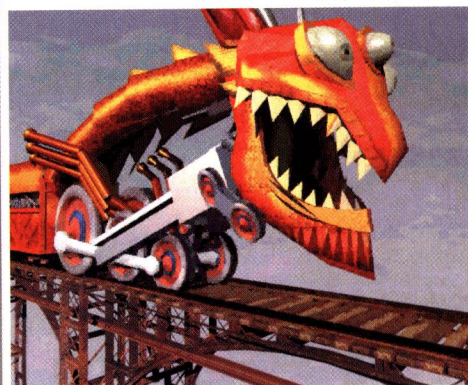
EVERQUEST

Probably the most notorious of all online RPGs, *EverQuest* has gone from strength to strength with a total of three expansion packs. A beautiful if repetitive game that has claimed the souls of thousands worldwide.

PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** Verant
PCZ ISSUE 80

◀ ACTION/ADVENTURE ▶

GRIM FANDANGO



If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. The comic interaction between Manny and Glottis is a high watermark for scripting in games, while sublime graphics and laugh-out-loud humour ensure it's at the top of its genre. A word of warning though: it's bloody hard and if your mind doesn't work laterally you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 71



SOUL REAVER 2

While this latest episode in the saga of Raziel takes few risks with the action/adventure formula, it's a consummately constructed example of the genre, with a compelling storyline, satisfying combat and excellent puzzle dynamics.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Crystal Dynamics
PCZ ISSUE 111



DISCWORD NOIR

Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and all the better for it in our opinion.

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Perfect Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 79



SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and combo system.

PUB Codemasters **DEV** Rebel Act Studios
PCZ ISSUE 98



THE NOMAD SOUL

Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless. *The Nomad Soul* is a huge intricate world populated by lap dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost pulls it off.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Quantic Dream
PCZ ISSUE 83



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

Reminiscent of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the excitement of carrying out a contract killing. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.

PUB Eidos **DEV** IO Interactive
PCZ ISSUE 98



PROJECT EDEN

Giving you control of four variously skilled operatives in a nightmarish future metropolis, *Eden* is at once predictable and innovative. The combat and AI may be dull, but the varied puzzles and raft of cool gadgetry make up for it.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Core Design
PCZ ISSUE 107



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, but with many of the adventure elements still in place. The result is surprisingly good, but not for traditionalists.

PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 84



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

One of the hardest things to do in a game is to make your audience laugh with you rather than at you, and *Escape From Monkey Island* is undoubtedly one of the most genuinely funny games to come out in recent years.

PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 98



METAL GEAR SOLID

Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), MGS's tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses make it a thing of beauty.

PUB Microsoft **DEV** Konami
PCZ ISSUE 96

◀ GOD GAMES ▶

BLACK & WHITE



Although it had its critics we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game both breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and lets you guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Overall we think it's pure genius in a box.

PUB EA DEV Lionhead Studios
PCZ ISSUE 100



CIVILIZATION III

Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard Civ fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Firaxis Games

PCZ ISSUE 111



THE SIMS

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthy long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, but you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucketload.

PUB EA DEV Maxis/EA

PCZ ISSUE 87



CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUB VU Games DEV Impressions

PCZ ISSUE 70



SIMCITY 3000

Ten years on, the offspring of the original building game *SimCity* still remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUB EA DEV Maxis

PCZ ISSUE 74



ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

Straight from the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. Despite its slightly cartoonish look *Zeus* is highly addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and an undeveloped combat system.

PUB VU Games DEV Impressions Games

PCZ ISSUE 97



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

Design and build your own theme park and then pack it full of the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up, while trying to keep the cash and the punters coming in. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive. Be warned.

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Chris Sawyer

PCZ ISSUE 75



MONOPOLY TYCOON

This mixture of the classic board game and a *Theme Park/SimCity*-style building sim is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real-time, the aim is to make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Deep Red

PCZ ISSUE 110



DUNGEON KEEPER 2

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.

PUB EA DEV Bullfrog

PCZ ISSUE 79



CALL TO POWER II

It might not have the official endorsement, but *Call To Power II* is a spiritual successor to one of the greatest strategy games of all time, *Civilization II*. The gameplay is familiar but every element has been polished and the result is a hugely challenging and rewarding experience. It's still well worth seeking out.

PUB Activision **DEV** Activision

PCZ ISSUE 98

◀ 3D ACTION / STRATEGY ▶

OPERATION FLASHPOINT GOLD



Now available with the tricky Red Hammer add-on, *Flashpoint* has become to tactical action what *Half-Life* was to shooters. Fight on foot or in tanks, fly planes or even direct an entire platoon, this game is total war – in your face and on a massive scale. The graphics are an acquired taste, but they convey a sense of wide-open warfare perfectly. It's the ultimate military simulation, with a stunning atmosphere and superb missions.

PUB Codemasters **DEV** Bohemia Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 104



GHOST RECON

A superb squad-based shooter, which masterfully combines tactics and action. The levels range from wide-open landscapes to claustrophobic city streets, in what is a stunning evocation of special forces warfare.

PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** Red Storm Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 110



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Looking old and with most of the original bugs intact, *Hidden & Dangerous* is still a great WWII game featuring some incredibly varied levels and a stirring soundtrack. Look out for the supposedly bug-free Deluxe release next issue.

PUB Take 2 **DEV** Illusion Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 79



HOSTILE WATERS

A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or up close and personal. Inspired by the 16-bit classic *Carrier Command*, it's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options.

PUB Rage **DEV** Rage Software

PCZ ISSUE 101



GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes RTS, RPG, real-time and third-person shooter combat elements. It's also rather funny and features near-naked women with blue skin.

PUB Interplay **DEV** Planet Moon Studios

PCZ ISSUE 95

◀ MULTIPLAYER MODS ▶

COUNTER-STRIKE



Counter-Strike is the game that has completely dominated the online world for more than a year now, and its popularity still shows absolutely no sign of abating. With more servers in more countries than any other mod and a totally dedicated army of fans, *Counter-Strike* has really proved that bedroom coding is alive and well and is in better health than it ever has been.

WEB www.counter-strike.net

PCZ ISSUE 109



DAY OF DEFEAT

Currently in its second beta, this WWII-themed game is being played by more people online than both *Medal Of Honor* and *Wolfenstein*. It's atmospheric, highly realistic and superbly designed.

WEB www.dayofdefeatmod.com

PCZ Issue 115



TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

A great squad-based action game with nine classes, a wide variety of weaponry and many map variations. The action focuses on infiltrating enemy bases, and the frantic gameplay requires more manual dexterity than most.

WEB <http://www.planethalflife.com/tfc>



STRIKE FORCE

Hot on the heels of *Counter-Strike* comes this superb total conversion mod for *Unreal Tournament*. It boasts outstanding maps and attention to detail, including heartbeat monitors that measure stress and infrared laser dot aiming.

WEB www.strikeforcecenter.com

PCZ Issue 109



URBAN TERROR

Realism mods tend to be thinner on the ground for *Quake III*, perhaps because of the cartoon-like engine, but this mod does a great job of utilising the strategy of *Counter-Strike* with the pure blast 'em up gameplay of *Quake III*.

WEB www.urbanterror.net

PCZ Issue 109

RACING GAMES ▶

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0



Despite the plucky challenge from *Rally Championship Xtreme*, *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* is still the benchmark rally title and looks set to remain so until *Colin McRae 3.0* turns up later in the year. The graphics are fantastic, the detail is overwhelming and the cars handle beautifully. So, if you are on the look-out for the definitive rally game, this is it – and it's cheap now as well.

PUB Codemasters DEV Codemasters

PCZ ISSUE 98

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP XTREME

This equals *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* as the top PC driving game, but the fact that it costs three times as much means it doesn't quite claim the top spot. It plays beautifully and even comes with online options. An essential rally game.

PUB Actualize DEV Actualize

PCZ ISSUE 110

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

Buckle up for some high-speed action as you race around London and San Francisco. The original *MM* was a belter, but with improved cars, races and controls, this is even better. We reckon it's the definitive arcade racer.

PUB Microsoft DEV Angel Studios

PCZ ISSUE 96

F1 2001

The most versatile *F1* game to date, with a full-on sim mode and an arcade setting for those who can't hack it. It looks great, but it comes with a huge caveat – if you want to see it as intended you're going to need a hefty machine.

PUB EA DEV EA Sport

PCZ ISSUE 109

BALLISTICS

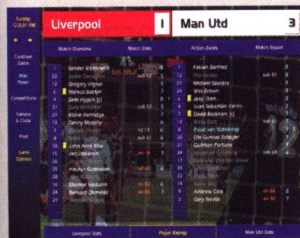
So you thought *WipeOut* was fast? Well, welcome to a new concept in pure racing. It only has seven tracks, but *Ballistics* has unparalleled speed, with a simple control system that keeps the emphasis on racing dynamics.

PUB Xicat DEV GRIN

PCZ ISSUE 111

SPORT

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 01/02



Another year, another update and yet another improvement on the greatest sports management game of all time, one that will literally consume your life. New features this time around include masked attributes (forcing you to scout for talent), updated team and player stats, and all of the new rules and regulations imposed by FIFA for the new season.

Pure genius.

PUB Eidos DEV Sports Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 108

VIRTUA TENNIS

Who would have believed that this console favourite would translate so well to the PC? Its control interface is supremely intuitive, while the AI is massively challenging. Best of all, though, is its truly sublime multiplayer options.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Rowan Software

PCZ ISSUE 114

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Another console game that has stormed its way to success on the PC. The speed, balance and feel of the game are uncannily realistic, while the diversity of moves, combos and circuits will keep you playing for months on end.

PUB Activision DEV Neversoft Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 98

VIRTUAL POOL 3

Easily the best cue-based game around, *VP3* features some near perfect physics and excellent graphics. The career and multiplayer modes are highly entertaining, and a superb tutorial will have you clearing up in no time.

PUB Interplay DEV Celeris

PCZ ISSUE 99

FIFA 2002

Still the best PC football game despite some irksome flaws, this graphically improved update introduces nuances such as through-ball and one-two options, which provide greater variation but less passing accuracy.

PUB Electronic Arts DEV EA Sports

PCZ ISSUE 110

ALL-TIME CLASSICS ▶

CHRIS ANDERSON DREDGES UP HIS TOP TEN GAMING CLASSICS AND SURPRISINGLY EVERQUEST ISN'T EVEN ON THE LIST



MIDWINTER (PC)

Epic in every sense of the word, *Midwinter* took you on a rollercoaster ride through a snow-filled landscape. Taking control of individual characters with different strengths and weaknesses and driving a huge variety of vehicles, all within the constraints of a pre-defined time limit made this one of the most tense gaming experiences ever to appear on PC.



ULTIMA 7 (PC)

This game had everything, literally: a strong storyline, character development, a great sense of humour (countless classic one-liners) and one of the biggest game worlds ever seen in a RPG at the time. *Ultima 7* represented everything that was good about the *Ultima* series, and is the closest thing to being 'perfect' the series ever achieved.



X-COM (PC)

Initially a daunting prospect, once you got to grips with it *X-COM* was a very satisfying and rewarding strategy game. Deep RPG aspects, resource management and turn-based land combat gave you so much to think about you often had to stop and take stock of the situation before daring to click the left mouse button and proceed to the next stage. An absolute gem.



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD (PC)

Much is made of the technological leaps *UU* represented, but what made it so ground-breaking was its rich and varied gameworld and non-player characters who seemed to have a life and personality of their own. The game-world was so big it was easy to get lost but you never cared as wherever you went there were new things and new characters to discover.



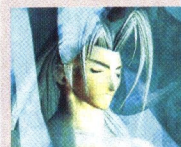
THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (PC)

Simply put, this is the funniest adventure game ever made, without exception. Truly hilarious one-liners and countless high-comedy situations coupled with difficult (and often obscure) puzzles ensured that *Monkey Island* would take its rightful place in adventure game history. Unbeaten still to this day.



SENSIBLE SOCCER (AMIGA)

Those crazy young upstarts playing today's 'sticky-ball-to-foot' football games can't even imagine what it was like to play a football game that required real skill if you wanted to win. *Sensible Soccer* is the perfect example of such a game, and many people still keep their Amiga 500 for this game alone – and I'm one of them.



FINAL FANTASY VII (PLAYSTATION)

As big in size as it was complex in nature, *FFVII* offered a bewildering array of diversions to complement its main plot, with many sub-games to be found for anyone who cared to look a little deeper into the areas they explored. Glorious FMV cut-scenes rewarded advancement, making this one of the best all-round RPGs ever made.



ULTIMA ONLINE (PC)

For sheer depth of gameplay, *UO* couldn't be beaten. It was the first title to really kick off the online RPG explosion and it still has thousands of subscribers. Player housing and trade skills that were 'interesting' as opposed to being there for show (hello *EverQuest*) set a great example. It might be falling behind the leaders now, but this is where it all began.



DOOM (PC)

Doom is one of those games you never forget. Deeply atmospheric and genuinely scary, the game that single-handedly kick-started the first-person shoot 'em up genre has never been bettered in single-player terms. There might be a million *Doom* clones out there now, but none of them hold a candle to the original and best.



SUPER MARIO 64 (N64)

Incredible graphics (for the time) and supremely addictive gameplay make this one of the best platform games of all time on any machine. It seems ironic now that people did not believe platform games would work in a 3D game environment when *Mario 64* achieved this and a whole lot more with such little effort.

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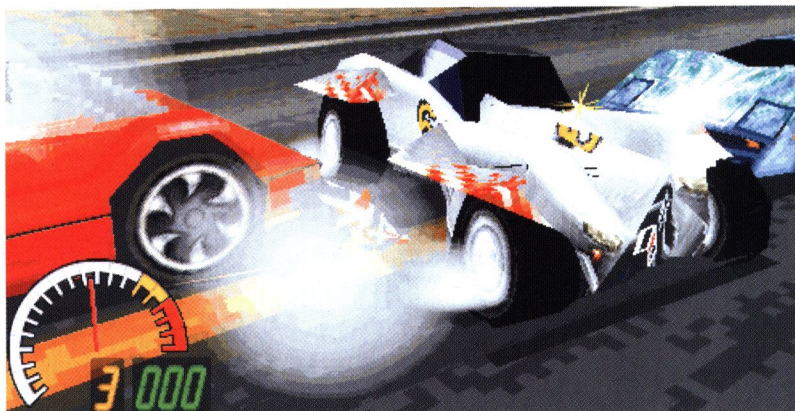
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RETRO ZONE



Crash, bang, wallop... what a picture!

CARMAGEDDON

Sick, twisted, depraved – the *Daily Mail's* favourite computer game in fact

IT WAS AS natural as cottage cheese. If you'd ever played a driving game that included humans, you will at some point have tried to run one of them over. You wouldn't have succeeded of course, since prior to May 1997 all videogame pedestrians were blessed with magic invulnerability shields that allowed them to pass through the body of your car unscathed. Alternatively, they would have these weird superhuman reflexes, making it impossible to catch the buggers and run 'em down. Luckily one developer realised the potential to be had

by reversing this situation – and didn't have any hang-ups about depicting it.

Carmageddon was always going to cause outrage once it appeared. How could a game that gave you bonuses for stylish decapitations with your spiked wheels not upset people? But no one guessed how bloody playable it would be, thanks to the free-roaming playfields and the oodles of secrets and bonuses and game-altering modes to unlock.

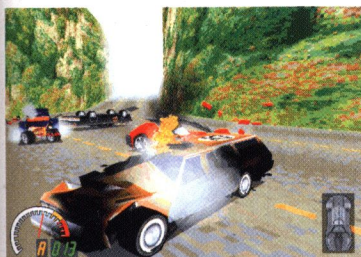
Controversy followed with the usual mass media suspects demanding outright banning of the game, castration of the

developers and stoning of the gaming industry in general. Months of negotiation with the BBFC finally led to the game being released with the pedestrians replaced by zombies that left green stains rather than red ones when you hit them.

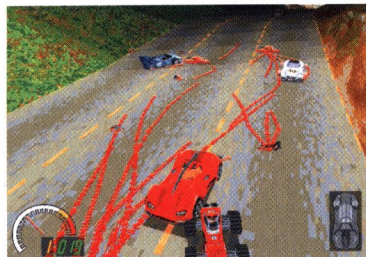
The annoying thing was that this somehow lessened the game's overall impact (proving that the *Daily Mail* and co were probably spot on all along about us). Luckily for gamers everywhere a 'special patch' somehow made it onto the streets that restored the crimson. Just don't ask us how. (Cough.)



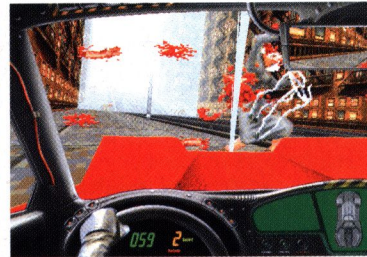
"Months of negotiation with the BBFC finally led to the game being released"



Cars and carnage. We loved it.



Skid marks are murder to get rid of.



The Green Cross Code won't save you.

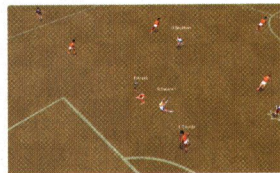
THE BEST OF THE REST →

MDK
(PC)

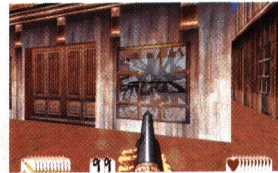
Shiny continued to redefine the term 'weird' with this, well, weird sneaking, shooting, sniping affair. Most confusion centred on what the name stood for (despite it being promoted heavily as 'Murder, Death, Kill' during the first few preview months).

Trophy Bass 2
(PC)

While Culy took readers through exactly how fish 'worked' during issue 50 of *ZONE*, gamers could get a chance to find out for themselves with this half-decent fishing sim. Hey, several million Americans can't be wrong (well, they can actually – witness the election of George Dubya).

Kick Off 97
(PC)

In the dark days before *FIFA* and *ISS* one name stood above all others in the world of footie – *Kick Off*. Until *Sensible Soccer* came along at any rate. Nonetheless *Kick Off 97* tried and failed to update the classic kickabout for PC gamers.

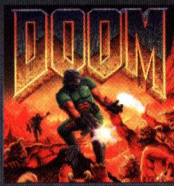
Outlaws
(PC)

A neglected genre, the Wild West finally got its moment in the sun thanks to LucasArts and its damned fine FPS. Borrowing heavily from just about every spaghetti western ever made, this really should have been the start of bigger and better things. Sorry pardners.

NEWS

GAMING NEWS FROM
MAY 1997

- Gamester Multimedia tentatively dipped its toe in the murky waters of PC games rental in the UK. The idea was that games could be rented like library books, with each having a key code that only lasted a certain amount of time and could be reactivated every time you wanted to use the game. Ultimately it was much easier to just buy the game and not have to bugger about with codes, and the company went out of business that same year.
- The first Man Who Knows appeared in *PC ZONE* and started a tradition of unrivalled industry spying that has continued to this day. Among the general industry machinations, the initial column speculated about a rumoured move by Peter Molyneux to Eidos and the demise of Bullfrog's *Creation* title.
- Under a huge veil of secrecy, Activision signed its first full Hypnotic game (the makers of the *Quake: Scourge of Armagon* pack). Hypnotic later changed its name to Ritual and the game in question turned out to be *SIN*.



GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

DOOM

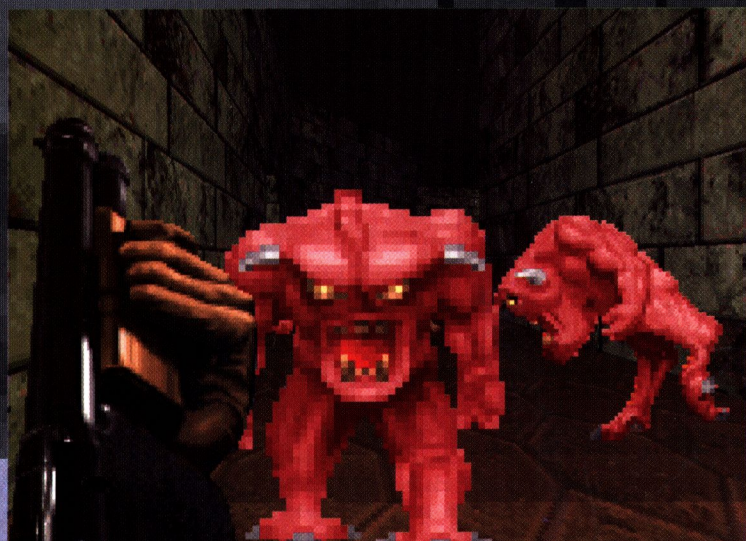
It started life as an *Aliens* game with sloping floors. But what emerged from that small office in Texas was something magical – one of the most groundbreaking, exciting and influential titles ever. **David McCandless** tells the story of the game set in hell that made us feel we were in heaven

GAME Doom

DEVELOPER id

RELEASED December 1993

INFLUENCED Um, let's see... how about every FPS you've ever played?



There was a time when these hairless, snarling pig-demons plagued our dreams. It wasn't nice.

THERE ARE SOME games that make you remember exactly where you were the first time you saw them. What you were wearing. What the weather was like. *Doom* was not one of those games. It was beyond that. At the PC ZONE office, back in December 1993, we were too busy gaping at the monitor and fist-fighting over the keyboard to notice irrelevant details such as those.

We had spent a marathon night frantically sucking the 4Mb shareware version down a 14.4 modem from a bulletin board in Texas. Loading it up, we were completely amazed. We were like new born babies. Rolling eyes. Lolling jaws. And lots and lots of drool...

HOLY SHIT!

Doom looked real. As hilarious as it may seem from the screenshots, more real than anything we'd ever seen. It moved fast. Arcade fast. The levels were huge, spacious. They looked like real places. Except there were these demons and zombies everywhere, and rivers of radioactive waste, secret rooms, catacombs and dark bits where the lights

were broken that made you feel really and truly scared. Your only comfort were these big weapons: shotguns, rocket launchers, a chainsaw. But the levels got weirder. The levels got darker. And scarier. And then these huge, howling demons started exploding out of the walls...

Sound familiar? *Doom* was the mother of all first-person ultra-violent shoot 'em ups. We were witness to one of the most influential, ground-breaking, and downright playable computer games ever. It was set in hell. Yet we were in heaven.

ID GETS AN EGO

They all played *Dungeons & Dragons* together. They had a shared love of Japanese games, horror movies and science fiction graphic novels. Contrary to prevailing wisdom, they considered the PC to be the future of gaming.

The hyper-geeky id team was small but packed with up-and-coming talent. Creative director Tom Hall. Young programmer and designer John Romero. Level-designer Sandy Petersen. Artists Adrian Carmack and Kevin Cloud. And last, but not least, was John Carmack, über-geek programmer whose high performance 3D engines would become a dominating force at id and in the games industry in the years to come.

"We considered ourselves underdog developers with ideas and passion, and each new project was a step up the coolness ladder," remembers Romero.

id had started out with the sideways scrolling *Commander Keen* series but the game that really put them on the map was *Wolfenstein 3D*. Released in July 1992, this action-packed maze/shooter game featured an impressive high-speed 3D engine and enough Nazi imagery to get them plenty of press and the inevitable ban in Germany. It sold well, but what's more it suggested for the first time that the PC wasn't just a golf and flight simulating 'dad machine' but could do fast action games as well.

The Texas-based developers wanted to break out of *Wolfenstein*'s boxy castles for their next game and do something more realistic, an action adventure with a cohesive storyline. John Carmack had a new engine in progress. It could as yet only manage "sloping floors" but it was a start. Sci-fi space beckoned as a setting and for a while they even contemplated doing an official *Aliens* game.

"But we bailed out because we wanted total creative control and that was not going to happen with a licensed property," says Romero. "So John Carmack basically said: 'What if we did the same thing, except with hellspawn instead of aliens?'"

And so it happened. Eighteen months later, they released *Doom*.

IDEAS, IDEAS, IDEAS

Playing *Doom* now is like driving your first car again. It brings back memories. Parts

"We considered ourselves underdog developers with ideas and passion"

JOHN ROMERO
PROGRAMMER/DESIGNER, DOOM



of it are familiar to you. You remember how it feels. And without modern control complexities – jumping, reloading, looking up and down – it's like driving an automatic. Pure, distilled gameplay. Shooting and killing. Reflexes and aim.

Even today you're struck by the sheer amount of great ideas in the game. From the well-balanced weapons to the slimy explosions of blood and rib cage. From the monsters that fight each other to the sprawling environments and real-time updating map. The levels constantly surprise you. The traps still get you. The secrets still elude you. And you still take dogged pleasure in collecting every last helmet and energy bottle, finding every secret door, and killing every goddamn demon you can find.

"Even from the beginning of the graphic engine's construction, I knew it

was far beyond anything that anyone had experienced," remembers Romero. "The atmosphere in the office was excitement, but also trepidation and a vague sense of not being sure of where we were taking this. The conceptual challenges were formidable, both for design and for programming."

The Hellspawn idea had ignited the team's imagination. They drew primary inspiration from their *Dungeons & Dragons* sessions, populating the game with demons and other unsavoury members of the role-playing menagerie.

"We pretty much came up with monsters that could come from hell – some of them are more traditional like the Baron of Hell, imps and possessed humans," says Romero. "[And] other monsters that no one had heard of before

like the Cacodemon, Cyberdemon, Mancubus and the others."

Other ideas, such as the unforgettably brutal chainsaw, came from the sci-fi and horror movies and graphic novels they were into at the time.

"I said we should have a chainsaw just like the movie *Evil Dead* so we could just sink it down into a demon's brain and just mow it down into the dirt," recalls Romero, possibly rather too fondly.

If anything the game had a surfeit of ideas. Special treasures, a hub level system, a HUD display with motion sensors, environmental dangers, level interactivity and the idea of different characters having different skills with different weapons. Plus an original BFG which blasted out 8,000,000 red and green balls everywhere. All topped by a complex story written by Tom Hall.

PROFILES

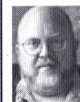
Together they unleashed the terror of *Doom* upon us. You'd forgive them for putting their feet up after that, but id's unholy trinity are as active as ever. This is what they are up to now.



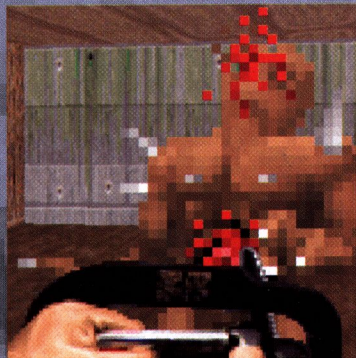
NAME John Romero
ROLE ON DOOM Programmer, designer
NOW DOING CEO of Monkeystone and currently working on *Hyperspace Delivery Boy!* for the Pocket PC.



NAME Tom Hall
ROLE ON DOOM Creative Director
NOW DOING I co-founded my third company with John Romero, Monkeystone Games. It's a blast



NAME Sandy Peterson
ROLE ON DOOM Level designer
NOW DOING: Working on games for Ensemble Studios, who are also making *Age Of Mythology*.





It runs on Game Boy Advance now, but in 1993 *Doom* was a quantum leap

But as the 3D engine developed, John Carmack was pushing for a more level-by-level game, over something with a strong narrative and inter-level interactivity. As Romero observes: "There was a point probably around June of 1993 where we re-assessed what our objective was supposed to be and we decided to boil the whole concept down to 'kill everything and get out alive'."

Tom Hall became disinterested in the game's simplistic design. Mid-way through the *Doom* development, he split amicably from the team and joined 3D Realms, where a lot of his ideas would end up becoming *Duke Nukem 3D*. Nearly a decade on, though, he's still proud of his contributions to *Doom*.

"As well as the original story, some levels, and the 'door trim is the key color' simple solution," he recalls, "I made up the term 'WAD'. We had 'Lumpy', a tool that grabbed lumps of data. John Carmack called upstairs to me, asking, 'I need a file extension name. What's a bunch of lumps?' – I thought for a second, and said, 'A WAD?'"

SMOOTHER & FASTER

With Hall gone, Romero took over the design reins. The embryonic form of what we now know as the first person shooter began to emerge. It was a super-fast action game hanging on the raw power of its revolutionary 3D engine, the speed and versatility of which was surprising even to its creators.

"The tech was just an amazing cheat by John Carmack – that's why it was so fast and ahead of its time," says Hall. "By just sort of doing 2.5D instead of true 3D, it made the math insanely faster and made *Doom* possible."

The *Doom* engine went far beyond anything yet seen on the PC, certainly in terms of raw speed. It featured a fully texture-mapped environment (including floors and ceilings), non-orthogonal walls (ie a wall that can be joined together at any angle, not just 90 degrees – and at any thickness), light diminishing, light sourcing, atmospheric light strobing, variable height floors and ceilings,



"Doing a sort of 2.5D instead of 3D made *Doom* insanely faster"

TOM HALL
CREATIVE DESIGNER, DOOM



Romero: "I love to shotgun imps in the face. They fall backwards with an URGH!"

animating environment elements such as lava and radioactive waste.

"Creatively, the technology dictated the parameters of what *Doom* should be, and Carmack's dictum of just getting the 'raw cool' out there with no frills is what made it the style it was," observes Hall. "The creative result was a synergy of John Carmack's tech and Romero's style and Adrian Carmack's art."

As the engine developed in complexity, so did the levels.

"When we started designing maps, we were still in *Wolfenstein 3D* mode – 90 degree square blocks and consistent lighting for the levels," says Romero. "But as we started exploring all the things we could do with the engine, then we started designing more interesting levels."

Doom has some of the most memorable locations in gaming history, notable for their wide-open spaces, heavy-looking structural elements, gameplay flow and sheer atmosphere. The first episode of *Doom* is still one of the best designed sequences in gaming history. Romero designed the bulk of it and looks back on E1M7 as one of his best piece of work. Hall favours E2M2 with its famous stacks of crates. Sandy Petersen, who designed all the levels for episodes two and three, prefers the secret level from episode 2. "A little gem of creature and unit balancing," he says

Romero also set the par times, the ridiculous 'best time score' which appeared at the end of each level.

"I started the level, ran to the exit as fast as possible, rounded off the resulting time, then added 30 seconds for padding," says Romero now. "Which means I actually got those levels done faster than the par times."

THE TASTE OF SUCCESS

Unsurprisingly, upon its release in December 1993, *Doom* was a total, unmitigated success. Not just commercially (bundling the first episode as free shareware ensured that an estimated six million people across the globe played it) but also for the prestige of this small Texan team. The sheer extent of what they had unleashed onto the world, however, surprised even them.

"It was clear it was a phenomenally cool game. However, that it would be that big a phenomenon, you're never quite aware of that," recalls Tom Hall.

"*Wolfenstein 3D* sold ten times what *Commander Keen* did. And *Doom* sold ten times that."

"It sold a couple of hundred thousand copies during its first year or so. Not that many really, considering its impact," adds Petersen. "It was pirated unmercifully."

"Lots of hate mail from the religious right was pretty fun, too," says Romero.



Ever since we had seen *Predator* we had wanted to fire one of these. Thank you *Doom*.

But *Doom* had a few more surprises which would guarantee longevity and influence far beyond the shelf life of the single-player game. It featured the first multiplayer mode where up to four players could gather on a level and fight to 'the best' over and over again. It was an unbelievable hit, crashing corporate networks the world over and introducing the words 'deathmatch', 'frag' and 'gib' into the gaming lexicon, if not the English language itself.

"I was the first to proclaim (as I usually did) the immensity of what we were creating and the concept of Deathmatch was a completely obvious 'BOOM' in the timeline of gaming," says Romero. "I played it in the office incessantly and I was the best for a long time until the others caught up."

In addition, *Doom* was coded with an open architecture so that anyone with sufficient mental prowess could not only change the levels and characteristics of the game but build *entirely new* levels, weapons and monsters. Thousands of new levels and a slew of 'mods' appeared, kick-starting an online community that still persists to this day.

"I knew it would be fun. I didn't know it would be such a huge hit. Everyone at work really liked playing it, so much that it delayed its release. We all knew it would be a cult success among hard-core gamers. The surprise was how accepted it was among mainstream folks."

REGRETS? I HAVE A FEW

So *Doom* spawned a whole new genre of games, proved the PC could do a high-speed action number with its incredible 3D engine and started the multiplayer revolution. Not bad, you might think. But for its detractors, it was rife with corruptingly Satanistic imagery and its ultra-violence could apparently spark schoolyard massacres.

The team know this is all hogwash, though, and to this day, they are proud of what they achieved on *Doom*. But let's face it, nothing is quite perfect and if they could change one thing...

"The ending," says Hall. "We had all agreed that a great game ending was important for player reward. Then they put out a game that printed some text slowly at the end. One day of work could have made the ending really awesome."

Petersen regrets how easy the game was to complete. "Most people started levels with some kind of significant equipment. However, almost all our playtesting was done starting each level with just a pistol. We made the game too easy for the average player."

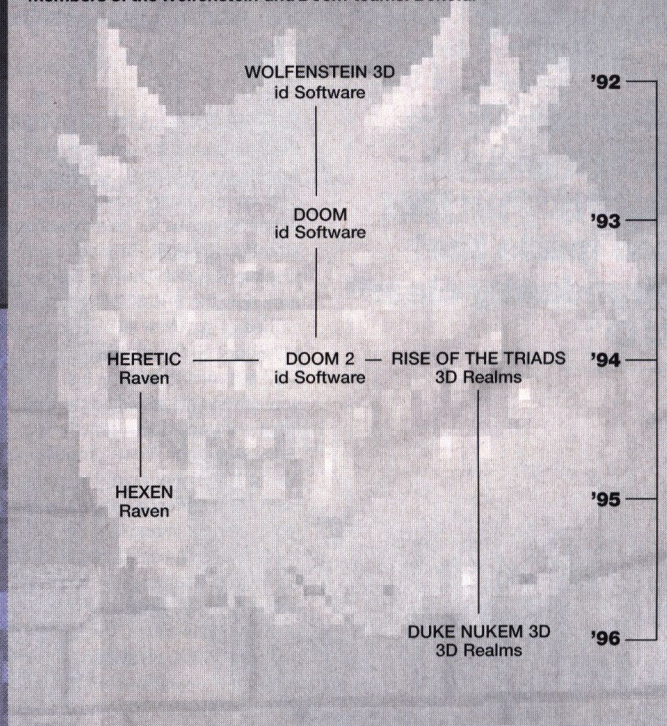
Romero has no such regrets. "The effect that *Doom* has had on the world is probably something that can't be completely seen because it's too big and reached too far into so many areas of the world's various cultures. I'm as much a victim of *Doom* as anyone else and it's just great." **EW**



Earlier versions of *Doom* featured a complex head-up display and RPG-style stats.

DOOM - THE WONDER YEARS

There have been countless first-person shooters and even the early pre-*Quake* years are littered with classics, most of which were created by members of the *Wolfenstein* and *Doom* teams. Behold:



THE FUTURE: WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE FPS?



Doom will return...

Despite *Half-Life*, *Medal Of Honor*, *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, and a stunning leap in technology and visual realism, the actual gameplay of the first-person shooter genre remains pretty much the same: shoot, run, pick up key, shoot, run, hide a bit, open door, shoot. For Romero the future for the genre lies in online gaming.

"Multiplayer, multiplayer, multiplayer. Large-scale FPS worlds coupled with team-based play and the ability to modify your character," he says. "The basic gameplay mechanics of FPS games are solidly defined and innately known by most gamers. On top of this we need to develop a larger scale design that you can concentrate on 'winning' while still doing what we love in FPS's - destroying the opposition, whatever that may be."

Petersen agrees: "I think they'll have to find some way to add character advancement and a persistent online world."

Tom Hall is more optimistic. "There is now a base from which hybrid genres can grow. Your palette of items in the future won't just be more weapons necessarily. It will be more tools for interaction and affecting your environment."



COMMENT

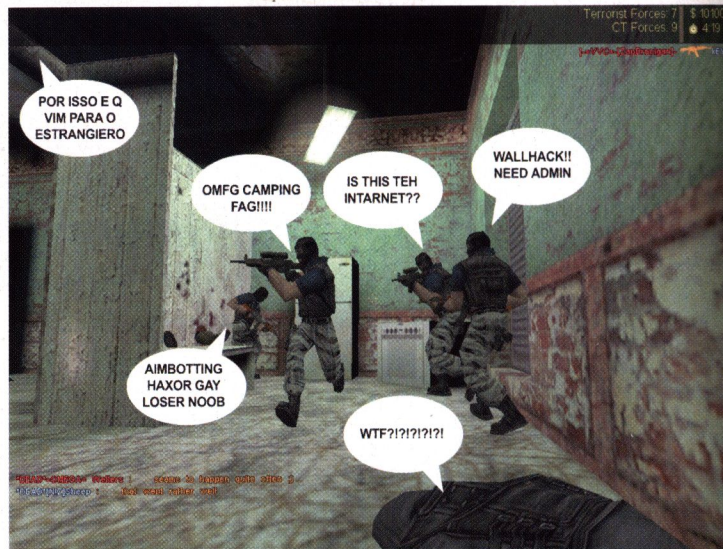
Counter-Strike and its gun-doting ilk can sod off, Phil Wand tells it like it is...

"Success is no substitute for quality. *Pop Idol* has made that abundantly clear"

ORIGINALLY AIMED

AT satisfying the urges of North American gun freaks, the world's most popular spawn of *Half-Life* quickly became famous for its exhausting attention to detail. Rednecks and retards love the way the AK-47 is held under the arm, how the SSG552 Commando is carried at shoulder level, and that an M3 Super 90 Combat takes precisely 5.17 seconds to reload. Just as real, you can bungle round corners and hose everyone down with the big gun you just bought. No skill, no strategy – clamp your finger on the trigger and even the most experienced adversaries won't stand a chance.

Whereas *Quake*, *Unreal* and *Team Fortress* encounters can stretch to whole minutes, taxing the reactions of everyone involved, forcing them to dodge, duck, weave and think ahead of their opponents, *Counter-Strike* battles can often be over in two seconds flat. Meet a couple of terrorists in a corridor and you'll be part of the decor before you can touch the mouse. Step in front of a sniper and you'll be looking skyward without so much as glimpse of the coward who bagged you. You'll then be forced to float around as a ghost, listening to dead imbeciles bitch at the live imbeciles as they completely fail to do anything remotely interesting. During my last two hours of terrorist gaming, I spent 38 minutes dead. And that's just nuts. I honestly cannot think of a less productive way to pour my free time down the drain.



OMFG CAMPING FAG!!!

It is a game that relies on teamwork, yet there is never any teamwork on public servers. The gameplay is unvaried, repetitive and frustrating, and far too reliant on 'camping' key areas of the map. And I can't think of another first-person shooter where chance plays such a huge part in your success – scores are often a reflection of nothing more than how lucky you got. While it explains the title's popularity (killing an opponent in *Counter-Strike* is not the most demanding of tasks), gamers who enjoy flexing their co-ordination and skill quickly move on. Those who stick around would be – and indeed are – cannon fodder in any other game.

Now, I do realise that it's the world's favourite online shooter by the hugest of huge margins, and that it dwarfs the headcount of its nine closest rivals put together. But to someone who hates beer, loathes football and hasn't seen a full episode of *EastEnders* in his life, this sort of talk holds no sway. Over the years I've got used to people doing all the things that I think are crazy, and while I can understand why they do it – married friends have made me see the attraction of hiding upstairs with a copy of *Championship Manager* or forging an alternative existence in *The Sims* – success is no substitute for quality. *Pop Idol* has made that abundantly clear. **[X]**

COMING NEXT ISSUE...

FULL REVIEW

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The biggest RPG since *Baldur's Gate II* is upon us.
If you liked *Morrowind*, you're going to love this

FOR YOU

DOOM III, LORD OF THE RINGS, INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB,
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NEOCRON, JEDI KNIGHT II, SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II...

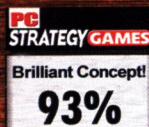
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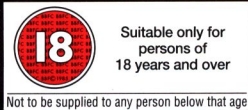
The enemy is smart, very smart. AI reacts to a variety of strategy, stealth and other combat tactics.



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